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by

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**CASTING SPELLS, CASTING BALLOTS: MAGIC, AFFECT, NOISE
AND MUSIC IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS**

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AND MUSIC IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS**

by

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Dedication

To my family with great love and gratitude

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This treatise examines the auditory culture of the political campaign through the theoretical hubs of magic, affect and noise. It examines the ways in which sound is used in campaigns and how those sounds affect listeners who are participating. The data for this project was collected through ethnographic work with various Democratic organizations in Austin, TX from 2006-2008.

Table of Contents

Everyone Has an Angle.....	1
Ethnography: Getting Caught in the Gears of Spin	5
Political Noise: Hearing in Mirror	33
Deafness	66
The Passions of Politics: Affect, Empathy and Sound.....	88
Political Magic	119
Noriega vs. Cornyn: Mimesis, Parody and Location In the 2008 Texas Senate Race	165
Presidential Pop	207
A Conclusion?.....	212
Appendix: Transcriptions of Ad Campaigns	214
Bibliography	220
Vita	229

Everyone's Got an Angle

We stood around the reception desk in the foyer of the party's headquarters. Earlier that morning, four representatives from the Black Democrats had met in the conference room to plan their strategies for the 2008 cycle and he was asking her questions about the meeting. He asked her about the Black Dems, what key issues and talking points were, who they were supporting, how they decided on their endorsements and how one goes about getting an audience with their local and state-wide leadership. She was candidly answering his questions when suddenly her excited, vivacious demeanor dropped.

What's your angle?

I'm just curious.

No one's just curious. No one just wants to know.

The conversation came to a screeching halt. She turned to me, now back in her delightful, smiling manner:

Everyone's got an angle.

Indeed. After she left to go back to her desk, he told me that he did have an angle. He was working on a local campaign, doing mostly block walking, phone banking and fundraising. His candidate was white and was running against an incumbent who was black, but did not have the full support of the black community. He had been inquiring about the Black Dems to see if and how his candidate could get them to throw their support behind him.

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Being around politics you are perpetually subjected to angles, to getting spun. Everyone from the Chairman of the Party, to the receptionist at headquarters, to the volunteers that come in to count bumper stickers and yard signs has an opinion, a point and a solution that they are more than willing to share; often without invitation. Every

story, opinion, expletive and ululation aim at the performative – they seek to elicit expected and mapped reactions, to change you, your vote, your vocabulary, your opinion. They seek to recruit you for volunteer hours, to sign you up for donations and to, at the very least, to get your vote. Sometimes it's not only about seeing an issue, a policy or a candidate in one particular way, it's about hearing it in their words. Like the storyteller or the lyric tenor, it's as much about the speaker's interpretation and articulation as it is about the policy, the print or the image that they reference. And like them also, there is a joy and a resonance in the act of the spinning and a tangible energy in the centrifuge of competing and magnifying currents of political arguments.

For the vast multitudes who consider themselves political junkies, or became CNN and blog-o-sphere addicts during this cycle, were adamant supports or grassroots campaigners, the pleasures of spin are nearly cosmic. Minutiae are blown up to epic proportions, talking points are endlessly debated and blood pressure rises with the heat of the political climate. A friend jokingly told me that he found himself screaming at the television one afternoon. In his defense, he was also waist deep in his dissertation, so his sanity can be called into question.

That incident notwithstanding, others also had visceral reactions to the vicissitudes of this campaign season, and the outlet for these is often a sort of deaf discourse. Democrats gathered together and shouted at red states for their blindness to their own material well-being and unfounded paranoia, for their staunch attachment to policies that financially rob them, and their attachment to cultural issues instead of sound policy. They also gathered to argue about the now-infamous Texas Two-step voting process of a combined primary and caucus. In these formal and informal exchanges

everyone was in a hurry to spin, to put their stamp, their story or their opinion onto public record, into the debate or into another's ear. Few were primed to hear what their fellow political creatures had to say.

But even in this deaf environment, everyone has an angle. They seek to get something out of every encounter, even if it is just the pleasure of the act. More often, there is much more than that, and politics can be a game of long waits and fast movements.

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For me, there is a pleasure in getting spun, being in the moment and in the feeling, arguing along with my fellow political junkies and playing competitive with political knowledge and analysis. Through these two years, I loved the debates, being subjected to the stories and opinions of the Texas Dems that I encountered.

During lunch we gathered around her desk and watched political videos on youtube. The field coordinator from West Texas was back and stopped by to show us the new video by the Texas Dems called 'By the Numbers'. It combines a whirlwind of statistics concerning the decline of Republican absolute control of Texas and the ascension of Texas Democrats in both local and national politics. Backing up these statistics are a mixture of driving, club-type electronica, voice clips from talk radio and TV that address Democratic gains, interview clips from citizens and even Barack Obama's statement about beginning to end the war in Iraq. The visual is a dizzying display of images of Texas, from the Dallas and Houston skyline to numerous stills of rallies and polling places, a cliché silhouette of a saluting soldier with a flag backdrop, and people wearing political buttons and t-shirts. The absence of an authoritative narrator gave a real feeling of Democracy – the story was driven by unnamed, neutral commentators, and was backed by numbers, numbers that reached towards triumph and represented all of the faces in the video. We sat there with our lunches in our hands mesmerized by the display. We watched it again. A feeling of hope and success was tangible. Texas was in play, Texas Democrats were in play, we were inside of the Trojan Horse, planning our attack.

Four months after I first saw that video, after a massive Obama victory and numerous heartbreaking losses, after knowing that Texas was not nationally in play, I still get chills when I watch the video. It touched and affected me, its impact spun me. Maybe this is what politics is all about, pitches and affects, numbers cased in feelings and wrapped in dizzying images, moving deftly in sound. Everyone has an angle, and this one worked on me.

Ethnography: Getting Caught in the Gears of Spin

He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest.

Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

On the afternoon of February 21st, the air in Austin was humming. The two last Democratic contenders, two novella heavyweights in a grudge match with history, were in town for what might be the final candidates' debate. True to its picture of itself, many Texans hoped that they would be the ones to put the winner over the edge. A decisive win in Texas, with its cornucopia of 193 delegate votes (228 including Super and Unpledged Delegates¹), would be enough to put the nail in the coffin of either candidate, although fundraising numbers posted by both campaigns seemed to indicate that both were prepared to go the distance. The phones at the Texas Democratic Party headquarters had been lighting up for weeks after the announcement of the debate. It was labeled as the hottest ticket in town and there was incredible excitement and anger over who would get one of the coveted tickets.

*I showed up to the office the morning of the debate dressed in jeans and a button-down shirt, expecting to work the phones until the debate, and then settle in by the television in the conference room to watch with the rest of the staff while drinking some of the canned Bud Light in the fridge. The phones were oddly quiet, with scattered calls from the press which were immediately shuttled to the media office. As I sat in the conference room watching CNN and waiting for the phone to ring, my supervisor stuck her head in, with a huge grin on her face. **You know that suit you own and never wear? Go home and put it on, you just got a ticket.***

I flipped out. I didn't even stop to ask how it happened. She said they would call me at home with details about how everything was going to play out when the word came in from CNN. I hurried out of the office with my phone in my hand, calling my Mother to tell her that I just gotten a ticket. As it turned out, the Executive D

irector of the party, got a phone call from CNN's producers asking for some well-dressed young people to be in the front row. Ruben had jumped on the opportunity to send the four office interns – both as volunteers and representative bodies.

When we arrived at the University of Texas' Recreational Sports Center, we were credentialed and inspected before being allowed in. After presenting our IDs and surrendering our phones, we wandered around starry-eyed, waiting to be assigned our work stations. There were cameras everywhere, huge electrical snakes running the length of the floors and staircases. Professionally dressed people in headsets and sensible shoes hurriedly patrolled the halls giving instructions, asking if people were in place, if they had arrived, and when were they going to be ready. In the halls there were sporadically placed tables with bottles of water, coffee machines and cookies. We walked past the VIP room, a converted yoga and aerobics space, with paper placed over the windows. Were Bill Clinton or Michelle Obama in there?

For the better part of an hour we waited, making conversation with the secret service officers and volunteers who were stationed there and talking about the excitement of being there. We tried to figure out where we were going to be sitting, so that we could reserve the best possible seats. We talked about each of the candidates and our brushes with them – along with Clinton and Obama, Bill Clinton had also spoken in Austin recently. One of the other interns gave us a good laugh with his Bill Clinton story: **So I had a chance to work security at the Clinton event. I didn't really have to do much, just to keep the crowd back from the walkway for his entrance and exit. So Bill's done speaking and everyone's cheering and the crowd is pressing forward as he's leaving the stage. I'm spreading my arms out trying to keep people back, looking over my shoulder, and when I turn around, Bill's standing in front of me with his hand out. And my dumb ass, I grab his hand and say 'I love you.' He just looked shocked, pulled his hand back and walked away. Of all the fucking things I could say...I didn't even say 'I love you, man' or something like that. 'I love you.' Fuck.**

Finally, Ruben came out and told us to hand out programs at the door and then to sit in the front row, all the way to the left, in front of the door that the candidates were to enter and exit from. We put down programs with our names on them and then stood at the doors as they opened to let ticket holders in.

The first wave looked like donors – heavy hitters who were given tickets by the campaigns. They rolled in with style, dressed up, bejeweled, and complete with designer sunglasses, a necessity for waiting in the February Texas sun. The next wave was the University ticket holders, students and professors. Many wore political t-shirts (although candidate shirts were not permitted) and pins. Most came single, as the University only allowed one name to be entered at a time for the lottery. The last wave was those with assigned seats, the VIPs and local politicians. The state senators and congressmen were in no hurry and strolled in with their spouses, and comedian George Lopez, a supporter of Obama within the Latino community, arrived with a small entourage, as did Laredo congressman Henry Cuellar, a long-time Clinton ally. When the flow of people had slowed to a trickle, we swiftly took our seats to find that we were sitting in front of the senators and congressmen, in front of Chelsea Clinton and George Lopez, we were in the thick of it all. We sat mere feet from the stage, close enough to see mediator Campbell

Brown's ankle tattoo and the growing lines on the faces of Clinton and Obama and Obama's growing patches of grey hair.

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Hundreds were in the converted gym on the second floor of The University of Texas' Recreational Sports Center. The building itself had been transformed over the past week into a full-on, multi-level sound stage and studio. On the top floor, three basketball courts had been converted into the primary sound stage, complete with a giant light rack on the ceiling and the typical CNN/Univision background. Black cloth curtains hung everywhere, making the gym appear to be a professional television studio. The Transportation Safety Authority had set up metal detectors at the only entrance, guarded by the Austin Police and the Secret Service. Before the candidates spoke, several individuals took to the podium and addressed the crowd. Bill Powers, president of the University of Texas, spoke along with Boyd Richie, the chairman of the Texas Democratic Party. The Longhorn band played typical Texas fare – The Eyes of Texas, Deep In The Heart of Texas – and the Longhorn Singers led the audience in the singing of the national anthem.

The energy in the air was palpable as the candidates were introduced, with the clear lion's share of the applause going to Barack Obama. After the press had their few minutes to take photos, the debate began and covered the usual ground – national security, healthcare, diplomacy, economics, and immigration. Both candidates gave their stump lines, presented their policies, responded to each other's well-known stances and generally made nice. As this was the 17th Democratic debate of the season, there was little new ground being tread – the economic meltdown that would change the face of the campaign was still months away.

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*It was hard to determine a clear victor in this well-choreographed piece of theater. On one hand you had Obama's unflappable exterior and dynamic delivery: cool, even-handed and contemplative. On the other you had Clinton's formidable policy, her attention to the lessons learned from eight successful years that fell short of protecting the path ahead from disintegrating underneath us and her attention to detail. She knew firsthand about passing legislation through a broken system and working with a hostile legislature. Both had made solid points, with very small differences between the two, and although Clinton had made what seemed like a faux pas in backtracking to healthcare after the debate had moved on, it seemed as though her gamble had paid off and had come across like a genuine interest in setting the record straight on a major issue that affects nearly everyone in one way or another. As the debate wound to a close and we stood on our feet applauding the two sparring partners, Ruben appeared, **Come on, let's go.***

We speed walked out of the converted sound stage and down the stairs to the main foyer of The Rec Center, which was swimming in cameras, complete with a few smaller sound stages on each side. People milled about accompanied by grunts holding

signs that gave their names and qualifications – defense expert, healthcare expert, Clinton or Obama supporter. These signs steered the press towards sources of information, analysis and opinion. Ruben turned to us, **Welcome to the spin room**. We were assigned to be the grunt of an expert and accompanied them around the spin room with their identifying signage as reporters looking for a quote or angle would spot them and ask them question. It was here that our initial reactions would be picked apart, substituted, qualified, justified and negated. The authority of this scene – the official logos of CNN, NBC, the New York Times, Univision, the big names, the years of experience – is part of the mechanism that spins, that creates opinions, focuses debate and provides the topics, phrases, keywords and definitions that then rhizomatically move across the media and the blogosphere, from mouth to ear, taking on a life of their own.



The physical manifestation of the spin room is but a small piece of the processes of spin. Some of the manifestation are public, some less so, but there is no question that they are everywhere. Although there are manifold places where the bylines of spin are dispatched, the most effective mechanism of spin is the self, the combination of the mind, full of thoughts and emotions, and the mouth, which represents the self to others. The influential power of the self far outmatches any of the more complex and expensive mechanisms on TV, radio, news outlets, print, and public appearances. We as political selves make decisions concerning our partisan opinions which are well-informed by the spin machine, and engage in interaction with others who are in the same general position. In these endeavors, we are gears in the machine, being spun and spinning ourselves, taking the inertia of affective analysis and phrases and recycling it as if it is our own.

Being part of the Democratic Debate was the dizziest experience I had had up to that point. Sure, I saw Paul Begala speak and got to shake his hand and exchange a few words after his keynote address, and I had had lunch of with Rick Noriega, Texas' senate candidate, but this far surpassed those. I was playing a part in a nationally broadcast drama that had moved the nation and captured imaginations across the globe. Yes, my part was minuscule, but I had credentials, which still hang proudly on my wall, responsibilities, and a front row seat, in front of the VIPs, even if I was just a token, a "well-dressed young person." Were I not so averse to profundity, I might be tempted to say that this was as close to the **sublime** as one can get. But it's not, for two reasons. First, this was nothing compared to the Democratic National Convention, when one's smallness and mortality in relation to greatness and immortality is truly felt in every way, and there is no place in the sublime for a junior or a practice run. Second, being part of something like the debate, or the election that makes and shapes history, does not humble one. It's not meant to. It's meant to turn you in dizzying circles, to confuse you and jump-start your imagination like a shot of nitrates into the gas tank. In the end, you end up in a place where you're not sure where the truth lies, but you are armed with a new vocabulary, a new way of seeing and speaking of things, and, best of all, you think they're your own.

Getting Spun: Being in the Middle

In the intoxicating present, it is impossible to be apart from situations that grasp at us from both near and far. We walk down our streets and see the varied signs of modernity and conflict – weathered **For Sale** signs in once desirable neighborhoods, empty storefronts, signs in languages that we can not read – and we hear the sounds of change blaring from passing cars, wafting over from construction sites, and spoken in the places that we frequent. These sights and sounds, tastes and feelings creep into our corner of the world and are woven into the fabric of our everyday experience. Our extensionsⁱⁱ, like our economic and political system, bring us into contact with the far corners of the earth, into places and spaces that our bodies are unlikely ever to see, hear, smell, taste and touch in person. We learn about the surfaces of places and the lives of peoples, and remember tidbits of information, factoids, both radically different and mundanely similar to our own. We learn how to feel about them *en masse*, and learn collectedⁱⁱⁱ judgment and relativism^{iv}. While they are not physically close, they become *emotionally* close, even as there are “no longer any real conflicts to be seen.”^v The creation of emotional closeness, in violation of borders, distances, languages and beliefs^{vi}, is a kind of pedagogy, teaching us to feel and to associate. Whether through mechanisms of sameness or otherness, association or repulsion, fascination or similitude, empathy or sympathy, are the foundational principles on which spin is produced.

The capturing, editing, sequencing and reproducing, as well as the transposition, of otherness close to home has many dimensions^{vii}. In a pessimistic note concerning the mass audience appeal of dramatic cinema, critic Susan Buck-Morss notes that “When the mass audience has a sense of immediate identity with the cinema screen, and perception

in itself becomes consensus, the space for intersubjective, critical debate and discussion disappears,” (1994, 56). The same conclusion can be drawn about any number of mass media apparatuses: television, the internet, print, the music industry or radio. The appeal to affectively, ideologically and personally identifying with images, figures and stances, many in the name of individuality, is part of what erodes critical debate^{viii}, and the attrition of public debate, according to critical theorist Jurgen Habermas, is facilitated by heavily financed and corporatized spin.

Buck-Morss shares the same concerns as the Frankfurt School theorists who saw mass media and the culture industry as a homogenizing and confining force – as well as an open door to brutality and inhumanity. However, she moves the debate into a new critical area – that of affect. Along with Habermas, other earlier Frankfurt School thinkers concerned themselves with the regulation and disintegration of social life into brutality, and the structuring of the body and mind under instrumental reason and exploitative capitalism. Based in that philosophical tradition, Buck-Morss moves into the domain of the regulation and systematization of affect, the synaesthetic bind between the senses of body and the churning of the mind, and their determinate effect on the re/production of social life^{ix}. This movement into the regulation and production of affect on a mass scale is very much a part of our current cultural, political and economic life^x. Both commercial products and political candidates are marketed using affect, with politics often borrowing from the successes of the market.

While the economy of affect is not completely codified, a certain system – derived from previous experience as well as from contemporary creations of affective sounds and images – is in play in our current practice of political campaigning. This

affective complex, which seeks to draw on loaded key words, sentiments, narratives and the projected sound-image of the candidate, is targeted at audiences around the country in the hopes of gaining a political victory^{xi}. While these practices in and of themselves can not be held accountable for the diminution of critical debate, they do inject the terms of debate into the general public, as well as the press, and attempt to create spin^{xii}.

Indeed, many critics have theorized the potential causes for the disappearance, or rather the non-appearance, of the public sphere, a place where individuals gather as equals to partake in reasoned debate on policies that affect the general public^{xiii}. Perhaps the most insightful critiques come from Habermas himself, who is credited with the mass diffusion of the term within the academy. He is also lambasted for being overly ideological in regard to the existence of a public sphere in the way that he conceived of it. While this is not the place to re-hash issues of Habermas' scholarship, I would like to dwell on the final section of his seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, where the author bemoans the end of that social space in part due to the proliferation of PR. Instead of places of debate, and forums for discussions and exchanges to take place across increasingly larger spans, mainly in the form of print, Habermas points to the creation of opinion by corporations who are looking out for their own (financial) interests. In the face of the nation-state political system, national security and the welfare state supplanting community concerns, mass media, like print, radio and television, become the regulators and arbiters of debate. In the face of spin, deliberation is reduced to the willful constitution of opinions on the terms of those who have vested, non-altruistic interests. In recent times, these interests are often of a neo-liberal, transnational capitalist nature, aimed above all at profit. He also notes the breakdown of

the bourgeois split between public and private spaces and issues. What was once private, as noted by many theorists, is now both public and fiercely political^{xiv}.

In the face of intimately corrupted public and private space, detached, transcendent analyses are impossible^{xv}. As the quote from pessimist Theodor Adorno says, aloofness from the present economic, cultural or intellectual system is impossible. We are as deeply bound to neo-liberal capitalism, the cultural, political and advertising industries as we are to a corrupted public sphere where the peddlers of spin hold court. If our field of analysis is the public sphere – and politics by design is public culture – than the analyses themselves are entangled in the PR that provides discourse and steers debate.

Spin, however, is not a one-way street, it is not an exact science^{xvi}. Each and every day, there are thousands of pendulations that attempt to influence our opinions, to inject us with a specific vocabulary, and to make us think that it is our own^{xvii}. There are, of course, times when we feel emboldened by packaged and delivered expert opinion, especially in exchanges over issues like the economy, rather than arguments over so-called moral issues. These attempts to spin us, these sensory intensities, only gain life if we allow them to, if we give them life beyond the page, the sound, feel, smell and taste^{xviii}. When we adopt a specific vocabulary and stance, feel them as local and pertinent to us, our present and future, we are getting spun. Often, we meet these intensities halfway and engage with them on ground that is partially familiar, culturally primed and irresistibly tied to our material and affective pasts.

Jim Spencer appears to be the picture of a political consultant – savvy, both cosmopolitan and local, frenetic and strangely amicable. He is at home back-slapping on the barbeque line at the Pasadena IBEW but is a Bostonian through and through, who loves talking about his favorite spots in the North End and his love of the harbor.

*Although a staunch Democrat, he works for a firm which consults with both parties, as well as independent candidates. He is weathered, the effect of years of manic political consulting, but maintains a suave yet earthy appearance, topped off with a shock of white hair and intense blue eyes. When I spoke to him at a workshop in Pasadena, TX, he was working on Joe Jaworski's Texas State Senate race, a congressional race in Wisconsin and a few smaller campaigns in the North East. I told him that I was interested in the cultural aspects of campaigning. **It's all about local. In Texas, it's about backyard barbeques, in Wisconsin, fish-fries. To win an election, you've got to be local,** he tells me.*

*Later on that day, he gave a talk about campaigning, filled with delicious sound bites, and words of wisdom, both practical and ideological. **75% [of eligible voters] think about politics and government less than one minute per week. During election time, seven to twenty-two days before the election, they shift to thinking about it for seven to fourteen minutes a week.** These are the people whose votes truly make a difference. However, there are the 25% of voters who are labeled as opinion makers. These people are informed to greater or lesser degrees and are willing to be public about them – they talk to neighbors, actively campaign, and participate by writing on blogs and submitting opinion editorials in local newspapers. These are the people, also labeled community leaders, who others listen to. **Begin the campaign with the top of the pyramid and work down.***

***People don't vote for issues, they vote from here (he points to his stomach) and here (he points to his heart).** Later on he says **values sell, not issues. Get out your narrative and make your constituency know you as a person.** Later, as we wipe the barbeque sauce from our mouths and finish off cups of coffee, on he tells me that candidates can not speak for too long while on the campaign trail, their job is to listen.*

When we engage with a candidate, speak about our concerns for specific local, national and global issues, we are getting spun, and we are partially doing it to ourselves. There is no spin, if we do not continue to revolve and perpetuate the sentiments that are proposed to us. When we participate in political conversation, we are part of these mechanisms of PR and spin that have replaced any semblance of reasoned debate by equals. The more applicable goal of this mechanism is not only to influence the inner workings of personal thought and feeling, it is to set us in motion, so we engage and tangle with others around us, in a chain reaction, a proliferation of affective worlds, pushing the stuff spin into the realm of ordinary, everyday life. We are in the middle, navigating between the winds of spin and the waters of our own cultural, economic and

intellectual base. Being moved is inevitable, but the tact that we take and the sails we raise are our own.

The Sonic Gears of Spin

It has been noted that little in the way of modern advertising occurs without some sort of background music or extra-diegetical sound^{xix}. However, music and advertising have a somewhat tense relationship as the importance of textual recall remains in friction with the production of the desired affect^{xx}. While music is an exceptionally effective producer of disposition and affect, overuse of music also produces cloudy recall of the particulars of an ad, specifically texts or important points. In order to spin, one needs to create both, a specific remembrance of discourse as well as the emotional reaction which necessitates a sustained engagement with the product. The commodity fetishism long associated with product marketing in an industrial consumer society is not deaf. On the contrary, the ear plays a tremendous role in picking up sonic dispositional cues that imbue the commodity with the magical powers that both veil the social relations and enchant consumers into the desire to part with their money^{xxi}. In one such experiment, it was proven that the presence of music in advertising, while muddying recall, did affect candidate preference in college students^{xxii}.

What the literature on music and advertising does not cover is the live aspects of political events, the music that happens before and after, that aids in creating an affectively charged milieu. The music in the example above, the Texas Democratic Debate, was specifically geared towards two things – nation and state – but also have deep resonances within the University community, creating a charged atmosphere of self-pride in both regionalism and nationalism. The selections ‘Deep in the Heart of Texas’

and ‘The Eyes of Texas’ (also known as ‘I’ve Been Working on the Railroad’), not only mark the location, but also reference the fighting spirit of [The University of] Texas, as they are familiar to students through performance at football games. Indeed, their performance did have the desired effect: while the band played ‘The Eyes of Texas’, students held up the ‘Longhorn Salute’ and sang along to both tunes, embodying these dispositional cues. Even the choice of Concert Band, instead of string quartet, jazz combo or SATB choir, sets the mood as both celebratory of shared identity and confrontational.

The importance of creating a mindset that is intellectually and affectively open to the type of message that is being broadcast as well as positioned to react in certain ways is as important to a political campaign, if not more, than the specific conjunction of words and music in an ad^{xxiii}. If spin functions in the form of multiple gears, sound is both one of its lubricants as well as one of its drive-shafts. While enveloping the discourses in such a way that they easily slide into the public sphere, music also exerts force of its own separate but in tandem with text and image.

Being the Frame: Embracing Economimesis and the Non-Transcendent

Philosopher Jacques Derrida coined the term *economimesis* to conceptualize the ways in which the production of discourse surrounding art and beauty (and taste) mimics a politics and a political economy and vice versa^{xxiv}. In the essay by the same name, Derrida takes Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* as his exemplar, focusing on the political economy of liberalism and the ways in which Kant theorized the separation of art and beauty from craft on the basis of disinterest. He relentlessly deconstructs Kant and brilliantly poses a philosophical and physical space through which to move beyond this

mimetic cycle in the act of judgment through a violating of the *pararegon*, the frame, both material and abstract, which encloses art. By framing art differently during different epistemes, the *pararegon* opens up the possible de/reterritorialization of art and its attendant discourses, but always in accordance with underlying political economies. As Derrida points out, the discursive philosophemes of art, while sharing in long traditions, are fundamentally altered when they are placed into these new networks:

Once inserted into another network, the “same” philosopheme is no longer the same, and besides it never had an identity external to its functioning. Simultaneously, “unique and original” philosophemes, if there are any, as soon as they enter into articulated composition with inherited philosophemes are affected by that composition over the whole of their surface and under every angle (1).

Following the incorporation of new or altered discourses into the existing networks of political economy, the *pararegon* works to provide the necessary frame that determines what art is – beautiful, true, and tasteful.

Derrida’s opening exegesis on *economimesis* insists that the inherently mimetic discourses on art and the economy – both the closed economy of circulation and the open-ended political economy – are in all cases held in an othered relationship with each other. As various social lives exist within particular political economies, discourses on art, truth and beauty, its praxis, value and power, are implicated in a relationship as necessary other^{xxv}. The boundaries that define any political/economic system are themselves dependent on the mimetic otherness of the art that is produced in the same episteme. However, the simple binaries of in/out, self/other, emic/etic are challenged by the *pararegon*, the mediator between the two, a membrane through which in and out are framed. The *pararegon* is neither, but contributes to the definition of both as a hybrid and

presses up against both and of necessity changes with circumstance^{xxvi}. As the frame moves, the evolution of philosophemes and the recycling or creation of new ones can be observed.

Contrary to Derrida's intent, I feel that *economimesis* is worth investigating as more than a problem that deconstruction lays bare. I propose that economimesis be considered as one possible method for the practice of ethnography and ethnographic writing. The ethnographer, like the *pararegon*, is a hybrid, neither inside nor outside, but placed into the multi-dimensional space of lived experience^{xxvii}. We are caught in between many influential spaces and intensities, our cultural space, economic space and the greater practices of culturally-pointed spin. We have of our own pre-conceived notions and prejudices, our practices, our positionality, and our epistemology. We are also imbedded in systems outside of our inner lives – our material and technological existences, the economic bases on which we balance, and myriad expansive cultural systems. We exercise options in our research, interactions with others, what we are exposed to and how we process it. But at the same time, our discourses – theories, terminologies and categories – are a product of the political economies in which we function. The human sciences even use the term 'frame' to talk about our research: we do in fact dislocate and de/reterritorialize our objects, but always on terms that are given to us, and not always for altruistic ends. The space in which we produce research is striated^{xxviii}.

We can not, nor should we aspire to, escape the fact that our actions and discourses are influenced by political economy. Indeed our mimetic faculty has never left us, we have simply shifted that which we mime and the ways in which mimesis is

deployed. In the process of getting our educations, conducting fieldwork and writing conclusions – putting a frame around our experiences – we move around on striated space. When we are in the field, we are in between in and out, actively selecting what constitutes a specific cultural phenomenon, we are the *pararegon*. Upon completion, when we write up or write about these cultural practices, we again chose what to include and how to present it, sometimes even for overtly political reasons. In each of these instances, the political economies on which we balance are our guide posts. As the earlier quote from Adorno states, it is careless at best and nefarious and dangerous at worst to feign impermeability.



The mimetic, by its very nature, eschews the transcendent, it seeks to move into close contact with its object, to rub its edges and know its surfaces and scars. Mimesis moves in accord with becomings – never an exact copy, not replication or reproduction^{xxix}. As anthropologist Michael Taussig points out, the power of the mimetic moves beyond the actual or practical power of its object, moving within the world of the mime, rather than the object which is mimicked, although both are in play and are transformed by the action. To part take in mimesis is to forgo the option of transcendence and to spread oneself out over the ground on which one stands, rather than to fly over it for a bird's eye view. It is a rejection of causality, verity and of substantial concrete timelessness and intransience^{xxx}.

In the political campaign there are market economies, economies of statistic, verity and untruth, and complex systems of political, cultural and moral capital. To be in the middle, an activist ethnographer among the politically connected, is to be exposed to spin, to be spun, and to in turn spin. Mimesis becomes a regular practice, a way of being. Out of necessity, I remembered stories, quotes and statistics, referred to important people who I did not know by their first name in conversation, and memorized political factoids so that I could strike up a conversation at moments notice. When important or notable people came in to the office, I learned varyingly appropriate forms of address, and developed impeccable Texas phone banter. I got to know things about Texas history and refer to them as if they were part of my own, just to be part of the conversation. I used James Carville's, Paul Begala's and John Stewart's talking points and took NPR as fact and Fox as fallacy. I once had a woman on the phone tell me that I sounded like a nice Texas boy, and that the Dems need more young Texans like me. I just responded, **I appreciate that ma'am, we're all working for Texas.** I didn't have the heart to tell her I was a carpet bagger. I lived a mimetic life, becoming political, becoming Democrat. There was nothing transcendental in my method.

My interview was short and sweet. I walked into the office, at the time a half-underground building on San Antonio Street, and was greeted by the receptionist, who sat in front of a large wipe board with names of cities on it – Austin, Lubbock, Houston, Fort Worth and Laredo. I later found out that these were places where town hall meetings were to be held, where the field director and the chairman met with activist democrats, fielded questions and complaints, and tried to sign up donors in their 'Sustaining Member' program, a fundraising engine where people sign up to dedicate a monthly donation of \$10, \$15 or \$25 (this program has since been renamed Texas Majority Builders).

I spoke to the chairman's assistant for a few moments, mostly about our respective time in graduate school at Texas, she had earned her master's degree in Linguistics from Texas a few months prior. When the director showed up, the interview

started. He asked me a few questions about my experience, short bland questions, then said that he liked my resume and would be happy to have me on board, but that there was no money for me. But if there was contract work that came through from local campaigns or political groups, he would try to send it my way. I told him that that was ok, that this was for research and that it would be an even exchange. He encouraged me to pick the brains of the people around me, saying that the people in the office were a great resource for anyone doing research on Texas politics. We shook hands and he departed for his office. It very well may have been the shortest interview I've ever had, save for when I interviewed to be a pizza delivery boy over a decade ago.

*After the director left, I chatted with the chairman's assistant for a few minutes while she showed me around the office – the copy and folding machines, the finance and field offices and the kitchen. We talked politics, the candidates and the dismal situation in Iraq. I told her that I had done my masters work on the anti-war movement in Austin, trying to bolster my progressive credentials. On the way out, we ran into the compliance officer, a jovial and vivacious woman who took an interest in teaching me about everything Texas, from politics to national parks and food during my time as an intern. I was introduced as the new intern. **So why do you want to work here?** She asked me, with a very serious look. I was momentarily surprised. It seemed as though this was the perfect time to work in politics, as the press at large had already begun to label this an historic election. But no one wants to hear about that, they already knew it was going to be big. I thought hard for a good response. **Because I want to work for the good guys,** I answered. **Damn right. Welcome aboard** she said with a smile.*

Part of the process of becoming a Democrat was knowing when to say what you were expected to – that you would vote for a yellow dog before you'd vote for a Republican – and knowing when to come up with your own spin, knowing how to cash in on the moral and affective economies, and when to be just creative enough to spin back. Creating the linguistic dichotomy of good guys-bad guys, I'd say that's pretty good spin, even if it is a cliché. Perhaps one of the great tricks of the mimetic is to identify cogent clichés and to artfully reproduce them in time^{xxx}.

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In an interesting but partially unsatisfying pronouncement^{xxxii}, advertising analyst James Twitchell labels modernity as the triumph of *adcult* – advertising culture^{xxxiii}. He claims that the business of advertising is the central cultural institution in modern US life. He states that,

...culture is carried on through the boom-box noise and strobe lights of commercialism. Much of what we share, and what we know, and even what we treasure is carried to us each second in a plasma of electrons,

pixels, and ink created by multinational agencies dedicated to attracting our attention for non-altruistic reasons (1).

...what is drawn down that channel [of desire], what travels with the commercial, is our culture. *Adcult* has its greatest power in determining what travels with the commercial. For what is carried in and with advertising is what we know, what we share, what we believe in. It is who we are. It is us (2).

Among his many staunch observations is that advertising is the educational program of capitalism – anonymous and ubiquitous, syncretic and symbiotic, profane and magical^{xxxiv}. And of course, we are helplessly attracted to it, mercilessly exposed to it, and inevitably part of it. After all, the best advertising is totally innocuous, free and self-perpetuated. “The purest form of advertising is harmless enough and is the goal of all commercial speech: word of mouth,” (14). Our appropriation of advertising’s message is advertising’s goal – we are part of the spin cycle that is part of the economic soil which we navigate and the pervasive cultural system in which we are embedded^{xxxv}. We can no sooner detach ourselves from *adcult* than we can forget our mother tongue.



Since advertising culture is both an integral part of our cultural practice and the essence of the political campaign, being an active part of the political process means that the practice of ethnography would involve the mimesis of the advertising system, *adcult*. My own *economimesis* involves the economies political advertising and partisanship, imitating and perpetuating their spin, being affected by them, and moving away from the urge towards transcendence in the form of deconstructing spin or stress-testing rhetoric. I

freely adopt their language, their style and panache. I hear their sounds in tandem with their messages and am moved in accordance with an urge to be a part of it all, included in the oceanic feeling.

Indeed I *was* awestruck by being there and star struck by seeing them. I marveled at the sheer numbers of people who participated and reveled in being in a sea of absolute passion for politics and for a person^{xxxvi}. I was outraged by the opponents' messages, their untruths, their flaws and hypocrisies, and staunchly defended the shortcomings of those for whom I worked. My own discourse on politics – morals, ethics, policies and personalities – was shaped by advertising. Instead of a concern with art and beauty, as Derrida applies economimesis, my concerns were for politics and ethnography, and their art and aesthetics.

This mimesis of the educational system of capitalism is non-transcendent, it can not be otherwise. To fly over this material and land on the lily pad of a determinate neologism or Theory is to miss the point at best. At worst, it would be the appropriation of others for my own narrow interest^{xxxvii}. We are inside this system, and this system is part of what provides the cultural products and determines the possibilities of their use. I am as influenced by this economy as by those with whom I worked and the scholars whose ideas have shaped my thought process. I get spun and I spin, this is the inevitable choreography of the mimetic dance of advertising culture. As such, the non-transcendent analyses of these events and experiences are imperfect, open to perpetual change and not definitive.

The indefinite nature of this method brings us full circle to *Minima Moralia*, and the insight of Adorno who concludes that: "Perspectives must be fashioned that displace

and estrange the world, reveal it to be...as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in messianic light.” Non-transcendent thinking is one method which does exactly that – it lives in moments and feelings, and embodies the extraordinariness of the ordinary without the impetus to see it from above and bring it to order. By admitting our indigent and distorted selves can we fashion new ways of seeing and understanding the world that we occupy at every moment.

Non-Transcendent Ethnography

Non-transcendence is a myth, a ghost, a phantom. But so are transcendence, truth and transparency; equality, detachment, objectivity and utopia. This does not stop us from aspiring, contemplating and fumbling towards a path that is different from the ones which have been laid out before us, one which hopefully will open new doors and windows and let some fresh air seep through. As such, aspiring to the non-transcendent is imperfect, not definitive, and open to perpetual change.

In the present ethnography, I am self-consciously part of the political machine, I get my lines from politics and I make use of the many para-political entities that are part of politics in the US. These include comedy, television, participant-made videos, various forms of media and opinion, and deep hanging out^{xxxviii} with those involved in the political process, from voters to political junkies to candidates. Perhaps the best part of this method is that everyone is a potential informant, as the variety of speakers in this text attests to. In my note-taking and writing, I allow the borders of fact and opinion, myth and reporting to bleed into each other seamlessly. Although I attest to the verity of everything written in my ethnographic sections, I do not attest to their objective truth – all

that I can vouch for is that I, and most likely at least a few others, if not upwards of a million others, saw and heard the same thing. I hesitate to contemplate the truth, the underlying force, the symbolic significance or the unifying theme, I note how the surfaces come together. When I can, I equate them to my own experience, or the experiences that I was privy to. These experiences, some public, some more intimate, are not unique, and I believe that there were many like them, some perhaps even more powerful, profane and profound, more hurtful and dark, than my own.

Rather than attempting to provide seamless context or bracketed history for the situations in which these experiences took place, I present them as scattered anecdotes, moments where ideas and concepts were sedimented in action. In keeping with the famous and overused post-modern adage that one never steps in the same river twice, it is impossible to transport the reader back to where I was when I experienced these moments. However, these meaningful condensations of intensity stand for themselves and are meaningful apart from the *exact* context of their occurrence. Just as they take on special significance in memory, those part taking of this writing have their own memories and experiences attached to this political cycle. I would rather that the reader fit these experiences into their own experience than fly over them with my transcendental eye. I do not attempt to transport you into my world, but to provide the viewer with some new raw material for them to make their own political mash-up.

This process, in the mimesis of advertising culture, is spin. It is about making the reader think differently about politics by injecting concepts, terms and emotions into their pre-existing situation. I have been spun by living in late capitalism and by actively involving myself in the election cycle. I have spun others by contact and conversation,

and am still spinning. I have been affected, and am attempting to affect readers – not by transporting them to another, alien or distanced world, but by re-shaping theirs through thought, contemplation, affect and discourse.

As such, this ethnography is not linear, it does not follow a line of thought, but rather attempts to place ideas on a map of politics. The map of politics is both smooth and striated space, where well-worn grooves are followed and new ideas are implemented and traced. In thinking about politics, this treatise is my own map which traces my experiences through noise and deafness, affect and magic. It does not lead to treasure in the form of enlightening insight, ultimate truth or future prediction, there are no clean and neat conclusions, just ideas planted into a dense and complex system, ideas on where to start another expedition. I contemplate politics through these ideas just as politics moved through me, spun me and forever changed the way that I see, hear and experience a campaign.

In an interview conducted shortly before his death, Joseph Campbell, one of the US' most notable scholars of myth, was asked about the prevalence of the hero in myths around the world. He responds by saying that heroes are what's worth writing (and storytelling) about^{xxxix}. Perhaps in the end, this statement is what I am writing against. There is no doubt that it is the heroes, anti-heroes, villains and victims that create the historical events about which we write. This document is no different, it was powered by the larger-than-life personalities and deeds of the US' political elite. However, it is centered around a subject that is of little to no significance, your humble narrator, who was little more than another volunteer, another witness to political drama and another vote, and certainly no hero. I write about both what I did and what was done to me, how I was spun, how

ideas permeated my everyday ordinary. We are the subject-objects^{x1} of history as we are both actors in our own drama, and subjected to conditions on which we have little or only selective control. The author is not dead, as postmodernism would have it, it has been generalized and with it, the aura of composition is gone. My stories are always co-written by the many who possess political opinion, and not some great wealth of information that would qualify them as ‘informants’. The great aura of ethnographic knowledge is what is gone, and I bid it good riddance. This is a different sort of story, just one among many, one in the crowd that is created by the necessity of mass politics.

Post-Script/ion: A Note on Reading, a note to the reader

This is not a traditional, narrative ethnography about music, or about politics and as such, it should not be read as if it were. The goal of this project was to experience politics in a particular time, space and place (or a few places as it turned out), and to write about it. What this two-year experience gave me was a sense of the beguiling incongruity of talk about politics, writing about politics and the experience – visual, affective and sonic. In this post-modern space of electronic media, spectacle, celebrity, and a billion-dollar popularity contest, the forms of ethnography and representation commonly used in ethnomusicology projects seemed ill fit. What has emerged is a project that is non-synecdochic, which takes the experience of the political campaign as the primary object and fits sound into that, rather than searching for the pieces of politics within sound. I am ultimately concerned with sound and the roles that non-diegetical sound in its many forms plays within the cultural practices of modern political campaigns.

As I write this, books are being published almost weekly about the new president, about the campaign and about strategies for both parties to expand their effectiveness,

forward their program, or get back into the game. I feel no need to replay these scenarios, to present the ‘facts’ of the campaign, or theories of effectiveness and appeal. If the reader is interested in a chronicle of the 2008 cycle, this is not the document to read.

What I do want to do is to produce a treatise that speaks with these experiential insights and that puts a new spin on ideas that shed some light (of the non-messianic type) on the practices of the campaign trail (although this can be shown as indigent and distorted in any light). This then is meant for a reader who has been engaged with the recent political churning, the public culture of the campaign, and has already-formulated opinions and remembered experiences. Unintentionally, I de-normalize the political process, make it seem grotesque, monstrous, foreign and magical. This was not my intent, but I think that I spent far too many hours around politics and watching advertising not to experience hallucinations of some sort, leading the question: does constant nervous observation lead to increased clarity or illusion? I can not answer this, and only hope that these pages will leave you the reader thinking differently about politics, letting nothing fall into the ‘normal’ pile and leaving everything on table as a possible problem or question.

When writing, I place narrative, both personal/ethnographic and theoretical, at the forefront. Much of the literature review and footnoting is pasted after the text in endnotes, so as not to disrupt the flow of the main text. If the reader wishes to engage in the extended literature, beyond the key theorists cited and debated in the body of the text, it is in the end notes that they should look. My goal is that this be as much a compelling, thought-provoking read as an erudite one.

On that note, I ask the reader to read slowly, not literally, but figuratively. Let my experiences, images and insights speak to your own; take time to remember your

experiences with this campaign season and seasons past. Interface with my own ideas and concepts, be both receptive and critical. If you are expecting long discussions of music or sound as an object through an entire chapter, or lengthy point-to-point or note-to-note analysis, you will be disappointed, as these chapters are held together theoretically rather than through attention to a singular object. I also take a long time to get to my conclusions, which come at the end of chapter, after the strands of argument have been teased out. In some cases, large portions of theory are left hanging at the end of one chapter and picked up in another. Please be patient, making sense sometimes is a luxury that modernity has dealt out.

Finally, I ask you to spin. Like any commodity, there are effective and ineffective ad campaigns, and this is no different. There will be ideas and theorizings that do not grab you or gain any traction. Don't feel compelled to make them work for you or to search for their truth or fault. Just forget them and move on to the next one. Window shop, if you will, become a flaneur in this arcade. If you are so affected, go ahead and take a look inside. So, without further ado, cut the ribbon and come in, reserve some time for this excursion, and if not now, come back, for there is always another day to take a look around. Let me show you "...all that is fairylike, marvelous, supernatural."^{xli}

ⁱ Source: State Senator Elliot Shapleigh's descriptive web page with exact breakdowns.

<http://shapleigh.org/news/1546-texas-democratic-primary-delegate-calculator>. Accessed last on 5/7/09

ⁱⁱ Theorist Marshall McLuhan labeled media as the extensions of man (McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: New American Library, 1964) Today, with our perpetual connectedness, we are more extended than ever.

ⁱⁱⁱ James Young uses the term collected instead of collective to denote that within delimited communities and spaces there are still differences of experience and opinion that are held and often embedded onto the surfaces and meanings of commonly held and public objects and narratives (Young, James, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

^{iv} In Susan Buck-Morss' 'The Cinema Screen as Prosthesis of Perception: A Historical Account' (in Seremetakis, Nadia, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*. Boulder:

Westview Press, 1994.), she addresses the ways in which early cinema audiences learned to feel as the characters on the silver screen did. Remembering Walter Benjamin's writings, Buck-Morss points to the theory that the only way to experience modernity is through its accoutrements, mass media, montage, and now edit and overdub. In *Mediated*, Thomas De Zengotita (De Zengotita, Thomas, *Mediated: How The Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in it*. NY: Bloomsbury, 2005) also takes up the a/effect of television, at one point addressing the pedagogizing aspects of television viewership: that we learn how to feel about social situations through the portrayal of emotion on the screen. While Buck-Morss and De Zengotita seem opposed to one of Fredrick Jameson's assertion that post-modernity has a flat affect, I prefer to keep both ideas in play. While our extensions take experience from all over the globe into our homes, we are not affected equally. We are both pedagogized, as De Zengotita and Buck-Morss point out, and desensitized, as Jameson would have it.

^v Adorno, Theodor, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, NY: Routledge, 1991. pg. 69. For emotional reactions to take place, as has been shown by neurologist Antonio Damasio, only the imagination has to be stirred. In *Looking for Spinoza*, Damasio (2003) asked patients to imagine or remember emotionally charged situations while being hooked up to body-sensing apparatuses. The result was that their memories and imaginations triggered intense reactions in both the brain and the body. While it is debatable what is 'real', Buck-Morss' theory of affective prosthesis, below, as well as the case of political drama, can induce emotional reactions in we the observers regardless of distance or immediate material and ethical relation to our own lives. Although I have some discomfort with Adorno's total theory as presented in 'The Schema of Mass Culture' because he insists that there are no real consequences, I believe that the real consequences, as we are observing today, are hidden and are replaced with hypothetical, political consequences which are manufactured to fit our pre-established narratives or are politically expedient.

^{vi} While not delving into the emotional impact of post-modernity, David Harvey's work, particularly *The Condition of Post-Modernity* (1989), theorizes 'time-space' compression, best exemplified by electronic media. In this theoretical frame, distant corners of the world are connected instantly through the availability of communication and information.

^{vii} Perhaps the most notable early theorist of the globalization of culture was Marshall MacLuhan who theorized both cultural grey out through mass media and exchange as well as the proliferation of idiosyncratic culture through appropriation of mass media's images.

^{viii} Stewart Ewen (2001), Jackson Lears (1994), James Twitchell (1996) and Thomas Frank (1997) have all written about the aspect of this identity-formation through consumption with regard to advertising.

^{ix} This does not disregard factors like economics and cultural patters, as well as individual and collective agency in the determination of social patters. However, the focus of this treatise is on the role of affect. In later chapters, I tease out the role of group and individual agency within our affective political milieu.

^x For discussions on mass media and affect, also see Thomas De Zengotita, *Mediated*. I will also add that the society of the spectacle (DeBord, 1983) as well as the celebrity system in all of its manifestations (including the political) is driven by the careful production of affect. Entertainment itself is driven by the production of emotion, as is the attendant market – dramatic characters are maintained because of their appeal.

^{xi} In the following chapters, I unpack this theory in various ways. In chapter 2, I examine the sound-image of noise as an essential element of successful candidacy. In chapter 4 I examine affect in relation to political campaigning and music. These analyses are heavily dependent of Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) idea of Percept and Affect, the creation of a non-human landscape in which humans are embedded and the non-human becomings of humans as they are impacted by the intensities of both ordinary and extraordinary experiences.

^{xii} This key word will be returned to many times in this chapter, and is often indistinguishable as its corporate practice, PR. There are obvious discrepancies within definition and practice – Ewen (1996) draws the line between PR and advertising as something which is free, versus something which is blatantly paid for. However, in a general economic scheme, both are paid for, the primary difference being that on one hand advertising injects sound-images of itself into the viewer with the hope of traction, on the other hand PR strives for a determinate role in the language of debate, the terms and conditions. This determinate role is what moves Habermas (1989) to decry its role in undermining the Public Sphere. I use the word spin as

both a noun and a verb, both with the same definition. Another dichotomy in this debate is produced by Raymond Williams in 'Advertising: The Magic System' (in During, Simon, *The Cultural Studies Reader*. NY: Routledge, 1999). In the essay, Williams states that advertising is for products, PR for people. Like Ewen, he also emphasizes the idea that the goal of either is to penetrate the ordinary and to appear without the bells and whistles of advertising as *news*.

^{xiii} The definition here is supplied by Jurgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. For critiques of Habermas' work and various re-thinkings of the public sphere, see *Masses, Classes and the Public Sphere*, Hill and Montag, eds. 2000, Kluge and Negt (1993), *Public Sphere and Experience*, and Nancy Fraser's 'Rethinking the Public Sphere,' 1992, as well as Habermas' own encyclopedia entry on the Public Sphere (1964/1974).

^{xiv} Both feminist and race scholars have noted this. Most famously in the second-wave feminist adage that "the personal is political" and by those who have noted that black, brown, yellow and red bodies were often on public display and were subject to various controlling mechanisms from ghettoization to forced sterilization and sexual exploitation

^{xv} Corrupted space refers not only to the non-existent public sphere, but also to spaces like the Academy and the internet where the optimistic idea of free exchange between equals has been shown to be a phantom.

^{xvi} However, PR does appeal to science as such. As Stewart Ewen (1996) traces the rise of PR he does so with a keen eye on another discipline that was simultaneously emerging: psychology and psychoanalysis. Indeed the growing ranks of spin doctors were reading the works of other doctors, namely Sigmund Freud and Gustave Le Bon, in an attempt to understand what Le Bon would term the 'popular mind'. Ewen, 1996.

^{xvii} As Sapir and Whorff hypothesized, and modern critics like Paul Rabinow and Nicholas Rose have reminded us, the vocabularies used to create the terms of debate have the effect of building the boundaries of possibility. I add that they also limit affective possibilities, especially where the extremities of emotion are concerned. As one example, although this is a dated statistic, drawn from the dawn of the internet age, the average adult, in 1996, saw three thousand pieces of advertising a day. I suspect that that number is much higher now.

^{xviii} A good example of the use of food in campaigns is a documentary called 'Street Fight' (Dir. Marshall Curry, 2005) about the race for the mayor of Newark between incumbent Sharp James and upstart Corey Booker. The narrator talks about having to feed the people to win an election.

^{xix} **I need to find this one.**

^{xx} See Gorn (1982), Kellaris and Cox (1989), Kellaris, Cox and Cox (1993), Mcinnis and Park (1991) for examples.

^{xxi} The idea of magic in political campaigns will be visited at length in chapter 4. Without spoiling the secret, I will say that the concept of magic in both modernity and specifically in advertising is common, dating back to Walter Benjamin, particularly in *The Arcades Project*, *One Way Street* and *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. Following that path, Raymond Williams (cited above), Jackson Lears and James Twitchell have written on magic and advertising in the US. While not citing magic per se, Thomas Frank's *The Conquest of Cool*, a history of advertising in the 1960s, takes commodity fetishism seriously enough that it is not a huge leap to move his scholarship into the ranks of enchantment and mysticism.

^{xxii} Thorson, Christ and Caywood, 1991; also see Brader, 2005.

^{xxiii} See the following chapter for a discussion of noise and its importance to a greater image of a candidate.

^{xxiv} Derrida, J. 'Economimesis.' *Diacritics*, Vol. 11, pgs. 3-25. John Hopkins, 1981.

^{xxv} Issues of the practice and power of Mimesis will be addressed in the final two chapters, using Derrida and well as Taussig's works.

^{xxvi} Derrida takes this term from Kant, used as the outside to the work 'ergon.' Derrida, *Truth in Painting*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987.

^{xxvii} The unstated here is that I believe that ethnography and ethnographic writing is an art form and thus subject to critiques of judgment, truth, beauty and taste as well as being embedded in political economies.

^{xxviii} Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, explain 'striated space' as one that has pre-conceived patterns and routes along which things flow. This concept fold into Derrida's concept of *economimesis* quite well as the idea an underlying principle that deeply affects artistic discourse is very much like striated space where routes are already chosen.

^{xxix} See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy* for in-depth definitions of becomings. When applied to political phenomena, see chapters 2, 4 and 6.

^{xxx} Also see Kathleen Stewart's *A Space by the Side of the Road*, especially chapter 2, for the artful application mimetic excesses.

^{xxxi} Kathleen Stewart, 1996, makes reference to developing the ability to tell stories, to have a particular way with words, which was both socially and locally appealing and brought people back to spend time with her and to share their own stories. Part of the getting spun is learning such ways. As we will see below, with Twitchell's *Adcult* as a system of education, advertising/PR now provides these vocabularies and ways of speaking about it for us.

^{xxxii} Although I will not discredit what Twitchell does say, his analyses leave untouched the possibility of coming to advertising *differently*. He does not address questions of consumption style, and what the nuances are between those who devour ads for commodities that they can readily acquire and those who stare longingly at goods they will never possess. He does not account for cross-cultural phenomena, in the way that for example Arjun Appadurai (1996) does in *Modernity at Large*, or address some of the gendered, racial and class discrepancies of advertising culture and its effects on differing populations. His premises are interesting, but they can be broadened and nuanced more than he himself does.

^{xxxiii} Twitchell, James, *Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in American Culture*. NY: Columbia University Press, 1996. I say that this is unsatisfying because at no point does Twitchell deal with people outside of the system of advertising, which seems open for a Gramscian/Marxist reading of exclusion and desire. While symbols of corporations and the pedagogy that accompanies this system are rampant, not all are exposed equally or are marketed to, this unevenness of advertising culture is worth further investigation, even though I do believe that we are in an era where advertising is the main producer and disseminator of culture.

^{xxxiv} These observations have also been made, and indeed Twitchell notes his indebtedness to, by Stewart Ewen, most notably in his groundbreaking *Captains of Consciousness*, and Jackson Lears. While I put Ewen in play with Twitchell, I will save my engagement with Lears' phenomenal *Fables of Abundance* for chapter 5, in my discussion of magic. Although not explicitly discussed in Twitchell, but of not in history of advertising and ad culture, are Roland Marchand's *Advertising the American Dream* (1985) and Thomas Frank's *The Conquest of Cool*, both of which are aimed at different eras, namely the Depression and the 1960s, respectively.

^{xxxv} There are many cultural and economic systems in which we are embedded, as Derrida notes in 'Economimesis'. However, I do not think that it is an overstatement to say that neo-liberalism and *adcult* are the most pervasive. I prefer not to use the term 'dominant' because of its implication and connections to scholarship about which I am less than enthusiastic. After all, Foucault reminds us that there is a symbiotic relationship between power (domination) and resistance, without which neither would exist. Both are inside of the system.

^{xxxvi} In the critique of transcendence that Derrida (1976) poses in *Of Grammatology*, with reference to Heidegger, Derrida poses that the crossing out of the word being, effacing it while leaving it visible, is the first writing, the first writings that move away from logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence. However, the effacement and denial of that metaphysics must be an ever present force, a process rather than a prescription. Transcendence rears up in many ways. It does in this treatise as much as I work against it. The medium of writing for an audience, rather than the self, leads towards a transcendent voice. Although I periodically efface transcendence, I also write it. This is an impossible project, but one worth working towards.

^{xxxvii} For the purposes of full disclosure, I *am* in this to get my PhD. Although I do feel a closeness to politics, and a deep interest in the reform of the political system, my involvement in this work was partially motivated by the academic demands of choosing a project.

^{xxxviii} Thank you to Katie Stewart for this most excellent description of modern ethnography. See Stewart, *A Space by the Side of the Road*.

^{xxxix} PBS *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*. 1988

^{xl} Although I acknowledge a debt to Georg Lucacs (1971) for this terminology, I don't feel as though his specific framework is of much use, especially, as Aaron Fox (2004) points out, class consciousness in a

land of slippery boundaries and anti-class discourse, is difficult to pin down, especially using European categories.

^{xli} This is the tail end of a quote from critic Franz Werfel, quoted in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (288). Benjamin (1969) cites this quote as the potential for art, specifically film, to move away from sterile reproduction and into creation.

POLITICAL NOISE: HEARING IN A MIRROR

Are You talking to me?

One of the most delicious ambiguities in English is the word *you* – it encompasses both the singular and the plural with no clear grammatical distinction. *You* can stand for both the individual and the group, separated out only by the intention of the addresser and the comprehension of the addressee. Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us that any utterance is social and is a contract, the meaning being understood and negotiated by both, equal parties in the determination of significance and efficacy^{xlii}. In the case of an appeal that centers on *you*, those involved in the hearing of the utterance decide for themselves if they are compelled to be involved, susceptible, swayed or motivated, to willingly become part of the *you*.

This linguistic idiosyncrasy appears to be prophetically suited for US Democracy, and indeed linguists Sapir and Whorff's hypothesis concerning the causal connections between language and worldview might be used to shed light upon this^{xliii}. Is it possible that US politics, so centered on the illusive dreams and ideals of liberalism – with negligible impact from political movements like monarchy, communism, fascism or socialism that once exerted considerable force in Europe^{xliv} – has been shaped by this linguistic idiosyncrasy? Even if one is unconvinced by linguistic determinism, it's tempting to see a correlation between this essential, recurrent element of political rhetoric, and the cultural surfaces in which these practices are embedded.

Fighting a wave of disenchantment and frustration with Washington, *You* has become a staple of rhetoric from the stump, the television and online. Speeches regularly contain calls to action on the at the daily as well as persuasive mandates that hinge on *You* sending politician X to

Washington to work for *You*, on *Your* behalf, with *Your* interests in mind. But it all begins with *You*. While this is in fact the way that democracy works – elections being dependent on voters, who are in fact being addressed and appealed to directly by the candidates – its proliferation in recent times, as well as its attachment to remembered and iconic phrases deserves to be more than a footnote in political rhetoric. This turn of phrase does appear at times of great upheaval, promise and enthusiasm, and it is a sonic presence in what are perhaps the two most notable elections in the media age.

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*He stands poised at the podium, a fresh face, the first Black contender for the office of the Presidency, with international ties like no one before him. He appears to look into the face of each and every adoring supporter who hangs on his every word. He stares into the future and into the past. Regally he sails the wave of energy to his denouement: **This election is not about me, it's about you.** The crowd goes wild.*

*On a blustery January, the stage is filled with the nation's political elite seated behind the podium and bundled against the cold as they witness history and promises of their own. The newly sworn-in president, a war veteran, Senator, and member of the US's most prominent Catholic family, is perched at the podium, fearlessly dressed in a suit with no overcoat despite the wisps of frozen breath that emanate from his lips with every word. **And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.** The crowd applauds as the words are indelibly inscribed into the political imagination of the nation.*

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As the term “grassroots supporter” came to be uttered with both mystical significance and partisan disdain, those who accepted the social contract of *You* gathered in offices, meeting rooms, homes, and parks. They waited patiently for a chance to see their candidate, in unbearably hot, cold and wet conditions. Some who were too young to vote worked tirelessly for hours in support of their chosen one (and became camera fodder for feel-good ads in the process). Those old enough to remember a time when they could not, would not, or did not actively participate in

politics spoke of history's fibers being put to the test. Could this really be the moment, or just another too-close-to-call letdown? Despite misgivings and doubts, they were emboldened by the message, the feeling, the promise, the fear, and the numerous others who gathered around in camaraderie and support. The *You* began to grow, to manifest itself in ever larger crowds and more heated arguments in person, on the air and in the press. There seemed to be a correlation between the size of the *You* and the attention that the press paid to the candidate in a self-perpetuating symbiosis.

Even early in the long campaign season, voluminous news reports, blogs, videos and photos rippled across electric and human seas. The *You* moved evolved being an immediate, personally communicative call to action spoken directly from the stage and morphed into a figment of the technoscape^{xlv}, the political landscape and the public sphere, a mythical beast and a material reality. Large and zealous crowds were translated into pictures, sounds and videos, reproducing themselves in different locations across the country and the globe. The *You* was translated across time and space, across generations and its being – the sight, the noise, the feeling – grew, touching both participants and observers. It moved with ebullient emotions, with sounds and exponentially increasing numbers, enthusiasm and obsession, thunderous applause, and thousands, tens of thousands, over a hundred thousand and finally millions and tens of millions. The *You* was moved by the voice and vision of one, but heard itself in its every noise that broke out after those words were spoken, or at the sight of discourse and promise personified.

The *You* is overdetermined and partially interpellated: created by the political structure of representational democracy, identity politics, pointed political rhetoric and the linguistic contours of the English language, and creates itself through the practice of participation in public and private events, the electronic and print spheres of opinion, in interpersonal encounter, and by

casting votes. It expresses itself, sees and hears itself, and like the blob, it feeds on the incorporation of others, turning them into part of the slow, giant wave. But the *You* resists static interpellation because it renews itself and becomes a force only when an effective affective structure is presented. Political formulas and strategies that worked eight, four, even two years before can prove to be wholly ineffective, older structures of feeling can be reanimated after time out of political discourse, and new and powerful rhetorical formulations can be created. Through various means, campaigns experiment with structures that perform the task of creating a *You*, structures that partially construct the *You*, leaving the *You* to finish the project laid out for it. Chief among these architectural frames is noise: copious, overwhelming, bone-rattling, deafening, disorienting, and *controlled*. The noise of the crowd – in applause, chants, enthusiastic screams and hollers – is one of the key building blocks, designed by the campaign and built by the citizens, which deeply affected the sonic presence of this cycle.

*On an early morning hotel shuttle to the Denver Airport, a slender middle-aged woman was helped into the front seat. In the silence dictated by five grueling but energizing days of meetings, speeches and celebrations, her phone rang, and she answered. She excitedly talked about the Convention, the acceptance speech, the coming battle in the months ahead. **You know this grassroots isn't going to stop once he's elected. We're gonna be right there with him.***

As the *You* heard itself in its own noise, the unbelievable din and historic roar of tens of thousands, it began to imagine itself differently, it transformed itself, its imaginations and fantasies. The *You* mystically predicted the future and placed itself in active relation to it; the *You* simultaneously became a logical outcome of participation, its brain child, and its determinant.

Noise: Power and Pliability

What is noise? Inspection of the term finds it used in a great diversity of places, spaces and practices at the most diverse ends of the social spectrum. Although most associated with sound and sonic cultures – in medical sciences, psychology, law, the recording industry, material and expressive culture – it also appears in the languages of stock traders and data analysts as well as those in the Communications Studies sub-discipline of conflict resolution. It is almost universally considered something that is unwanted, a hindrance and a presence that intrudes, distorts and obscures. Auditory theorist Steven Connor even cites a psychological study that concludes that children who are subjected to noise while at school – industrial noise like a freeway or airport for example – have notably decreased powers of concentration, score lower on standardized tests than comparable peers who are educated in low-noise situations and have decreased problem solving skills, even when removed from the environment^{xlvi}. Connor’s own conclusion is that noise that we are not in control of subjugates and weakens, along with distorting and hampering.

In conflict resolution studies, noise comes in many forms and makes clear decision making difficult to execute. In Wu and Axelrod’s “How to Cope with Noise in the Iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma,” one of the most often-cited articles concerning conflict resolution and noise, the authors define noise from the outset as, “random errors in implementing a choice”, stating that the scenario of encountering noise in a real-world situation is common^{xlvii}. In our world of speed and interconnectedness, their observation, a kind of rational Murphy’s Law, that everything that can go wrong will, seems apropos. In this case, noise is what goes wrong, contrary to plan, the unimagined, unexpected and unaccounted for. This could be as simple as a slip of the tongue that accidentally releases critical information, or as complex as major and serious events intruding on the space of the interrogation. Wu and Axelrod design a method for taking the unexpected into

account in the process of negotiating sensitive situations, a way to noise-proof or buffer sensitive situations.

For statistical analysts, data noise is information that is extraneous and makes the empirical discerning of trends difficult. In the words of one consulting group, data noise is that which “does not typically represent the main trends, thus making these trends more difficult to identify” (Lynchpin associates, <http://www.lynchpin.com/white-papers/understanding-data-noise>). Noise to this group is extraneous, and must be carefully extracted from other data so that trends can be made clear. The implication, and hence the necessity of this particular industry, could be likened to the job of a neurosurgeon in that it takes expertise to know how to separate data from noise, it is not a simple wheat-chaff equation to be undertaken lightly by the inexperienced, or subjected to blunt tools and brute force.

For economists, the phenomenon of noise is defined as price and volume fluctuation that make the interpretation of the overall market trends unclear. In general, the shorter the frame that analysis takes, the more difficult it is to separate the noise from actual market movement. This in turn leads to the existence of a category of traders referred to as ‘noise traders’, who encompass anywhere from a portion to the majority of stock traders depending on the analyst. Noise traders are defined typically as relatively low-dollar individuals who buy and sell stocks on their own without first gaining the knowledge of the fundamentals of that particular security or industry (also referred to as ‘day traders’ by some). According to one definition, they are also prone to overreacting to either good or bad news (<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/noisetrader.asp>), causing drastic market gesticulations and vicissitudes, which are inexplicable through traditional market data analysis. Noise traders do not separate genuine market movement and trend from short-scale ebb and flow and are thus swayed by non-data that does not impact individual industry

fundamentals. While it is acknowledged that most traders reject this label, analyses of the impact of noise traders continue to be a part of economic inquiry.

It seems as though modern economic analysis of noise traders bears very blatant similarities to the ‘rabble’ of the early American colony. The rabble, the uneducated, land-poor laborers of the fields, piers and factories of the colonial aristocracy and upper-class were utterly despised. Debates raged in person and in print pointing to how they were unfit to be part of the governing process as conceived in the liberal one man, one vote ideology. They were unreasoned and would only vote in their own self-interest, with their stomachs, not for the greater good, or that of the nation. The rabble – found in the rough and tumble bars near the waterfronts and factories – were only engaged when absolutely necessary by the power-wielding politicians who would frequent these places of ill repute at election and referendum times. While often decried by early progressive voices as inauthentic and exploitative politics, these politicians would often sway their constituents with alcohol, food and false promises^{xlviii}.

Auditory Culture: Moving through noise

In the auditory culture realm, Jacques Attali (1977) considers all music to be organized noise, and at one time, all of what we call music was considered noise^{xlix}. Indeed all sound is noise of one variety or another; we just find ways to classify it. Noise is a boundary that has not yet been crossed, has not been tamed to fit into our own conceptual and cultural schema, or has been intentionally manufactured to transgress categories that are already present. It is normalcy pushed into overdrive and amplified beyond recognition or logic, everyday sounds placed where they do not belong, at volumes that are intolerable or even painful. Connor takes this assertion one step

further stating that modernity characterized by the human capacity to make inhuman sound. From the deafening noise of mechanical technology and war to the disembodied sounds of the telephone and record, to the amplification of the minute sounds of rushing blood and the delicate hums and ticks of insects, we are surrounded by the bizarre audiospheric cacophony of our own making.

Noise is also contingent – one man's music is another man's noise. It reflects held aesthetics and the threshold and tolerance for variation and deviation, as well as imagination. We find noise everywhere: our homes, our places of work and leisure, public spaces and private events. We are constantly re-defining our parameters for noise, including and excluding as repetition becomes either unbearable or invisible. It is a nuisance, a distraction and a motivating force, as well as a variety of sound that exists in the background, out of mind's ear but within auditory distance. Here is where Connor's intervention into blanketing noise is key: he asks the question of control. To be subjected to noise, made to listen, is to be controlled; but what about controlling noise? For Connor, this act of producing noise, which you are then subjected to, is empowering. Attempts to control radio and the public deployment of high-wattage sound systems, often accompanying music that is deemed to be somehow transgressive, that exert control over noise are implements and attempts at gaining power^l.

Self-described noise musician and philosopher Paul Hegarty takes a Bakhtinian approach in reminding us that noise, like a speech act, is a social negotiation^{li}. It requires a producer (although that could be produced in the natural world) as well as an auditor, a discourse and an aesthetic. Noise is a social creation that is necessarily in opposition to another sonic phenomenon, be it music, silence, or the same sound at a reasonable volume. By this logic Connor's dictum on controlling noise points directly to confrontation, noise is not only created in opposition, it is molded by a desire to subdue, subjugate, manipulate or clear space, minds and beings. Those who

look to produce noise are in search of not only power, but oppositional control, to wrest potency from another.

Noisy Vicissitudes

Recording engineers work within a binary of signal and noise; one is desired, the other, a miscommunication and a failure, full of excesses and complications, unwanted and un-useable. But this strict binary does not account for the many vicissitudes that noise undergoes as it moves through time, space and cultural boundaries. Noise becomes signal in particular instances, just as noise morphs into music at specific historical junctures. Change can be imposed on the noises that previously existed as pariahs that moves them into existing sonic categories or creates new ones in which to put them.

Julian Henriques (2003) equates the poles of the noise-signal binary to medium and message, and the ambiguities laced within the material and the ephemeral natures of sound^{lii}. However, Henriques insists that the two are not poles, but are deeply intertwined, the materiality of the medium having an effect on the message, its production and reception. Citing Anthony Moore, he makes use of the phrase ‘either and both’, meaning that phenomena can simultaneously or diachronically be either and both signal and noise. In his essay, he investigates Jamaican reggae sound systems, known for their volume, among other attributes. The messiness, the snaps and pops, of analog turntables and acetate records played at devastating volumes, noise, is part of the bodily pleasure and meaningfulness of the music and its attendant event, its signal. The music depends on the noise to be culturally appropriate to the dance hall sound system form and might meet with negative reception if this noise were to be removed. This slippery interplay of signal and noise, medium and message, as we shall see below, is a most appropriate lens with which to

view political noise, from crowd applause to the endless banter of pundits and the steady flow of advertisements.

Another Noise

Outside of all these definitions, is another one that I would like to forward: that noise is also that which is common, heard but forgettable and easily ignored, meaningless and devoid of gravity^{liii}. The phenomena of background noise, so common in our society of machines, attests to the invisibility of noise, or rather the constant and accelerated flux of sound from unnoticed to unbearable and back. As I demonstrate below, this function of noise is an apt metaphor for political rhetoric as it too oscillates between the unheard and mundane, and the impossible-to-ignore and destabilizing.

John Cage insisted that most of what enters our auditory perception is noise – the myriad sounds of our daily lives in modernity. To re-write the definition of music to include the sounds everyday, his seminal non-work *4 '33''* invites the audience to listen, and to *hear* these ordinary sounds (Erlmann, 2004)^{liv}. These noises were not necessarily distracting, offensive or painful, but were unheard, listened to outside of the concert hall only at certain times of intense concentration or slippage; they exist outside of the habits of listening and the practice of hearing. To incorporate them into concert-ways of hearing endowed them with new meaning, a new relevance and a new place in the discursive system of music.

While these broad conceptions of noise as offensive, unbearable or nonsensical sound, as the total mass of all that is heard, as unremarkable and mundane to the point of disappearance, disruptive behavior, unpredictable behavior or unwanted action, are clearly different, they do

overlap at many points. Even as a multiple signifier, they do not force a definition upon a sound, as much as they reflect the social situations and conditions of sound producers and auditors. One noise may move from being unheard to desirable to unbearable and disappear in the background again freely. Considering our growing culture of personal listening devices, nearly instant electronic reproduction and constant mobility, our soundscapes are in constant flux and the vibrations that penetrate our ears are subject to our own rapid gesticulations and re-territorialization. Sounds often simultaneously fill more than one social role – augmenting or distorting, pleasing or appalling, affecting in oppositional and prepositional ways.

However, one consistency remains between auditory, economic and communication theories: noise is never clear or semantically articulate. As a co- or sub-category of music, noise shares in music's polysemic nature, its capacity for multiple and contingent interpretations, its vague and contested meanings. For engineers, economists and data analysts, it is a hindrance, an opaque film over trends and numbers, unable or unnecessary to understand. For auditory culture of all strains, it is outside of the organized, or intentionally disorganized, excessive and blurry. No matter the social state of noise, it is antithetical to clarity.

However obscure noise may be it does possess a special quality, which is affect. Many scholars point to the fact that sound, emotion and the body are densely tied in theory that dates back to Aristotle^{lv}. Noise, for Connor, is always *visceral*. Those affected by noise, from industrial clamor, airplanes passing overhead, high-decibel concerts, the inexplicable gesticulations of the market or a particularly ear-opening rendition of 4'33", cannot help but be changed by the experience, modified by the magnitude, omnipresence or subliminality of noise. They truly 'feel the noise'. The definition of affect that I find the most compelling is drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy*, defined as both "*a block of sensations*" (164, ital. in the original)

and “*nonhuman becomings of man*” (174, same). These becomings are a point that precedes or erases differentiation, where the subject disappears into the landscape, the picture, or the place. I add to this list, the sound, as descriptions of being lost in the sound are common. These blocks of sensations stand on their own, apart from the object that created them and have a transformative and lasting effect on the observer (on this topic, more is said in Chapter 3, *Affective Politics*). The affects that noise possesses and passes to its subjects alter their perception, leave them differently and move them to action.

This is echoed by Connor in when he theorizes the state of the subject in modernity not as a point but as a membrane or channel through which sound moves^{lvi}. The subject of industrial modernity is not as much a receptacle as a conduit for sound. Tying these two threads together in a political context moves towards a theory in which citizens are affect, spun, as the affects of politics – noise, rhetoric, emotion – pass through and transform them. What I would like to add to these theories is that sound does not move through subjects temporally. If well executed, sound gets trapped in the subject and emerges at later times, in perhaps a different form, to move through other subjects like a demon in a horror movie. As we will see below with the sound of clapping, sounds move through the crowd as they hear themselves produce themselves, but apart from the crowd this enthusiastic sound manifests itself in other kinds of political noise and affect.

In the realm of political noise, the sound of thousands of participants putting their hands together and applauding wildly erases the differentiation of the crowd. From afar we are a mass of supporters, from within we are an unstoppable movement, an irresistible force. When we look and listen from afar it is with a sense of foreboding, that the opposition is too great in number; from within we feel an inevitable and mystical sense of triumph, which pushes us to donate, volunteer

and give of ourselves. The act of collective clapping is like an amplifier, each clap moves through us and into another, repeated thousands of time until it reaches a deafening pitch.

A Brief Conversation About Noise

Did you hear what they've been saying about him now? She asked. That he hangs out with terrorists? That he's a socialist or a Marxist?

Do you think that will matter now? I responded. It was already into October and the gap in the polls was widening.

No, it's just noise. That's all it is. Besides, most of them don't even know what it means to be a Marxist anyway.

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Politics is filled with noise in both conventional and metaphorical senses. The affect, feeling, sensation and picture of immense noise are perhaps one of the most moving aspects of a political rally. Conversely, the mundane background noise generated by the constant banter television ads, the media talking heads, and the endless, meaningless speculating is one of the least affecting parts of politics (for the sake of you, the reader, I'll focus on the more interesting noise). When engulfed in a sea of spectators, all bunched together and jockeying for position, holding cell phones and digital cameras up high and hoping for a souvenir shot or video clip, all looking for the best spot in which to view the spectacle, the sound of the crowd's applause is a giant film that coats the spectators, the nourishing embryonic fluid of a political moment. Within it, we are all joined together, a momentary community of body and mind, spirit and ideology. The air moves around us with tangible energy as our ears ring with the firecrackers of claps and elated vocalizations. Complete strangers greet each other cordially, offer high-fives and hugs, strike up conversations, trade stories and memories. We are becoming the *You*, both singular and plural, affectively bonded and changed by presence and participation in noise. The space at rallies

becomes a living atmosphere – as full of being and life as it is of expectation and energy, material as well as functional, transformed in the moment and transformative in memory and in its reproductions. The feelings of being *there*, at *that* moment, in *that* crowd, are lasting, morphing. The arrows of these affects are the quantifiable and numerical – they aim for majorities at the polls through votes, volunteers and money. The captured ephemeral feelings, photos, comments, articles and memories are the excesses of the drive to quantify the crowd.

The gathering of the crowd, its noise, is one of the most crucial aspects of political advertising, political involvement and persuasion. Drawing out dense and enthusiastic crowds through marketing, publicity and celebrity power is essential in re-presenting candidates as electable, viable, exciting, and worthy of the attention of potential voters, donors, and media outlets. Not only is it crucial to show shots of the candidate surrounded by adoring fans, pulsing throngs pushing closer and closer to the stage in quasi-religious fervor, it is also essential to hear and feel them – the roar of the applause that punctuates and frames talking points and sound bites, or the candidate’s entrance onto the stage. The moments of arrival and departure, so mythically ensconced in political theater, act as an obvious barometer to popularity and enthusiasm are accentuated and noted by journalists who recount the thunderous applause of the long-awaiting spectators and edit their video accordingly.

At these moments the living tableau of the celebrity political candidate becomes the picture into which the crowd loses itself, becoming-one with the candidate’s political movement as the embodiment of political life and democratic ideals through noise. In Deleuze and Guattari’s exegesis of the concept of the percept, they use the example of Virginia Woolfe’s Mrs. Dalloway, from the novel of the same name, “who perceives the town – but because she has passed into the town like ‘a knife through everything’ and becomes imperceptible herself,” (169). These crowd

scenes, masterfully created by the campaign^{lvii}, spew with affect, transforming the participants into an undifferentiated noisy mass and a persuasive political percept. The individuals become imperceptible as they become the crowd, a pack with the candidate as their leader. Popularity, the necessity of democracy, is a percept of thousands merging in dedication and devotion to one, who in turn will be faithful to them. Like the character in the example, we are in the crowd and imperceptible, but this transformation needs the accompaniment of crowd noise to move the individuals into being a political pack.

As the press and the campaign struggle with and against supporters and spectators to craft a candidates' persona, they are also creating a sound/percept. While campaigns attempt to control the message and associations of the candidate, they manufacture a picture of an object that is synaesthetically connected to sounds – sound bites and the noise of applause. On the campaign trail wise words spoken mean nothing if they are not accompanied by the sound of mass approval. The image of the candidate must be synonymous with applause, the picture of an event in which the observer partakes, the percept, the living picture, must sound like the typical voracious crowd, it must be accompanied by self-made noise.

The political crowd is the pack of modernity's liberal politics; it aims to grow and to move with singular purpose, efficiency and breadth^{lviii}. Behind its leaders and its hierarchy, it seeks to conquer through communion and action, and to share the spoils in orgiastic delight, then break apart into its smaller segments and modules after the feasting. When the pack is again a necessity, a leader must assemble them, grow them, and once again bring them under his control. Their efficacy is put to the test and if defeated, his followers go hungry. To grow and maintain these packs is a sonic duty: discourse, soundscape and the noise of the *You*; the latter grows and multiplies while it amplifies its multiple self and denies the individual self.

The noise of the crowd performs a number of functions which interlock to propel the throngs into collected emotion and multiplied ecstasy, as well as providing the living blocks of affect^{lix} that move the participant/observer into action and provide sustaining transformation past the fading of emotion and dispersal of the crowd.

The Democratic National Convention had been a long few days, starting at 6:30 and ending well after midnight. Most mornings were hectic, gathering credentials, frantically running errands for the office, fielding questions, and more than a little hostility. No one seemed willing to believe that a volunteer for the Texas Democratic Party has little say over who gets invited to a DNC event, or admitted to the Pepsi Center. Many angry people asked to speak to someone else, or turned away and muttered under their breath.

*But on Thursday, the day of Obama's historical acceptance speech, I was able to exit the office early and take a shuttle over to Investco Field for the big event. One of the College Democrats from UT had gotten there early and had managed to save me a good seat, with sight lines to the main stage and two of the three podiums, as well as the big screen that enlarged the event big enough to see from Mars. It was still early in the afternoon, with the Denver sun beating down relentlessly as the mostly local politicians and activists took to the podium. I chatted for a few minutes with a man from Long Island who had come as an alternate to the New York delegation, but soon succumbed to fatigue. Suddenly, I was jarred out of my slumber. The stadium literally shook with applause, cheering, and the pounding of feet. In that moment, the atmosphere suddenly changed, it was absolutely electric, full, and pressed against me as I could feel my body shake and my ears ring. It had been transformed from an atmosphere of anticipation to one of arrival and release. My friend nudged me, **Hey man, Bill Richardson's speaking.** I jumped up and started clapping as the Governor took the podium, basking in the feeling of it all.*

Philosopher Don Ihde (1976/2003), in his work on the phenomenology of sound, has pointed to numerous ways in which the auditory imagination works^{lx}, a few of which are particularly applicable to the large-scale political rally. He theorizes key three points in his theory of listening: the dissolution of self in sound (as well as in music), the co-presence of listening, and the (f)act of listening with the entire body. He draws no conclusions, but leaves these open to further inquiry, expansion and application to different circumstances. Political crowds are one instance where all three of these are in motion, in play, and are formative forces in the acquisition of political feeling, as well as a place where political noise is a key factor.

Sound at excessive volumes, one of the many definitions of noise, can cause the disruption of focused and private internal dialogue, forcing the inner voices to curse the invasion of the outside world...*it's so loud I can't hear myself think*. At these moments, internal dialogue does not stop, but rather is moved away from where the ego would like it to be and into forced altercation and relations with a social other, unwanted and unable to be successfully or creatively integrated into the present aim. The undeniability of the outside world, and the unwilling auditor's place in it, forces the internal dialogue to engage with the noise. It changes the flow of thought, moving it into the social and away from the solipsistic. As noise flows to and through the body, it takes the mind's inner dialogue with it, redirecting it and disrupting its self-prescribed path. The self helplessly compromised by noise.

In the political context of a rally, where social space is politicized, the roar of the crowd, its applause, shouts and chants, forces internal dialogue into social engagement with the others who are present, who are listening, feeling and responding to the discourse, the rhetoric, the spin. The crowd submits to these words and gestures and sentiments, but also to the emotion of the noise, to *getting spun*^{lxi} – incorporating the feelings and actions, the lines and points of the political machine into the self. The crowd willingly participates in its own self-delusion and self re-creation in the mold set out for it. By forming on their own and responding positively to the cues to make noise, they perform their duties. As the imagination of the political machine charts demographics, the crowd moves to fit these pockets, to be enfolded and to establish ownership of these pre-fabricated idealities. As those around you erupt in applause, insert their commentary, and show their associations to separate dimensions of discourse, their noise penetrates the inner spaces of personal thought and moves it into resonance with the sound of the ether, into affective communion.

In front of us were two black couples, dressed to the nines, suave, jovial, vivacious, gregarious, and unabashedly vocal. The man in front of me was a large man, well over six feet, with big arms and broad shoulders, a shaved head, gold hoops in his ears and hands like meat hooks. He wore a brown checkered suit with a well-pressed white shirt and sharp gold cufflinks. Next to Andrew and me were two white women from California, timidly vocal but engagingly talkative.

*When Barack Obama was announced and strode regally onto the stage, we all jumped to our feet, remaining there for the first few minutes of the speech. When the reality of a half-hour speech set in, most sat down, but continued to enthusiastically applaud and cheer. The man in front of me exuded the picture of being in a stereotypical Black Church, he responded to the moments that touched him as though Obama himself were but a few rows away, and not a giant head on the jumbotron. He pointed at the podium and intoned **say it, brother, say it!***

*Midway through the acceptance speech, Obama touched on the topic of education, which clearly hit a nerve with the two women next to us. They screamed and clapped. The man in front of me abruptly turned to her and said, **‘If you want him to keep talkin’, you’ve gotta let him know. Say “Say it!”** She blushed a little and laughed, but he was serious, this was a teaching moment, full of passion and pride. **Come on, let me hear it,** he prodded. **Say it,** she said timidly. **You can do better than that,** he responded, feigning frustration. He demonstrated again, pointing at the podium and shouting **‘Say it’**. She practiced again, this time pointing and elevating her voice. **That’s it. Now that’s how it’s done.***

*The next time Obama ended on one of his major barn-burners, and the crowd erupted, he looked back at her to see if the lesson had stuck. She quickly pointed at the podium and said **‘Say it’** with a smile. The group in front of us grinned and applauded, for both speakers.*

At times, this loss of self is not forced by volume or intrusion, but is a welcome and desired by-product of the listening action. We seek to be in the music, in the sound, in the moment. We try to be one with the sound, to let the sound dominate and move us where it goes, whether it is a familiar journey or uncharted territory. As part of the crowd, the audience and the pack, we are encircled by flesh, sound and ideology made material. Sonic dominance (Henriques, 2003) moves us from the plane of the self, the singular *you*, to the plane of the plural, disembodying as it embodies differently, moving and molding, separating as it reconnects us to others. The pleasure of the sensation of hearing ourselves multiplied, each round of externalized approval, encouragement, and enthusiasm amplified beyond our individual capabilities. We seek to be inside these percepts: to be affected by these land/soundscapes^{lxii}.

Idhe asserts that we hear ourselves differently, that we feel our own resonances and our own voices extend into greater ranges and feelings than that which is heard by others or captured through mechanical means. In the political pack, we also hear ourselves differently, we feel our eardrums shake, our chests tremble and our palms sting from the intensity and force of the collected noise. We respond to the calls as one gigantic machine, a blind organism with the ability to shake even Man's greatest architectural feats. In the pack, we feel resonances deeper than ourselves, but contribute it to our own making, the gargantuan *You* that speaks in the simplified language of noise. Our self is expanded, experienced larger and deeper. If flesh is the barometer of becoming^{lxiii}, then by our noise on our flesh, made through our flesh, felt from head to toe, inside and out, we are becoming *You*.

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If we believe Idhe's insistence that we hear ourselves differently, Steven Connor's (2003) assertion that we produce ourselves differently when we clap must be taken into consideration^{lxiv}. While political rallies can be different – clapping is sometimes substituted for shouting and the waving of signs – clapping still stands as the appropriate and expected response, and the main producer of this sort of political noise. Apart from primary day and Election Day, with the notable exception of those chosen for further service at state and national convention, we make ourselves heard through active participation in the act of clapping. Connor, in a brief overview of the phenomena of clapping, runs through a number of interesting theories that intersect and fold into the production of political noise.

A theory was first forwarded by late 19th century psychologist William James, the first psychologist to challenge the mechanistic Cartesian theory of affect, forwarded that a clap was the “sonic abridgement of the embrace” (quoted in Connor, 68). While this frames the celebrity culture and affective optical/physical culture of modernity over a century ago, I am unconvinced that James presciently foresaw our mass culture of rampant applause, and was perhaps thinking of the genteel end-of-the-performance applause more common in polite 19th century society. Even in light of the more raucous settings of working-class entertainment, I do not think that the massive sounds of celebrity culture in modernity, like the screaming of thousands of Beatles and Michael Jackson fans or the huge political rallies that we regularly witness, could have been predicted by James. But there is no doubt that anyone in the audience would substitute a clap for a handshake, and a handshake for a hug. They just settle, knowing it or not, for a public sign of approval, shared and amplified.

*The speech ended and red, white and blue streamers swam through the air and white confetti fell as if the whole of Investco Field were enveloped in a snow globe. Firecrackers shot forth from tubes at the top of the stadium. At the top row, a single lone figure waved a huge US flag furiously. Some of the observers had already filed out. As the applause died down and we collected out paraphernalia, he turned to me, practically crying and gave me a bear hug. **This is our moment, man. We can't lose.***

The sound of clapping is the body made vocal, or quasi-vocal, its speech reduced to un-nuanced expressions of noise, differentiated only by duration, intensity, presence and non-presence. For Connor, it is the irrational expression of human life, unable to be placed into systems of signification and defying logics. It is the sound of compressed and restrained affect that bursts forth uncontrolled, mired in muddy relations with others and at the service of charismatic power. Clapping is inarticulate in many ways. There is no voice, save for ‘body-voice’ as Connor refers to the clap, but this voice is essentially inarticulate, dumb. There is little communicative

power in the clap that is specific beyond the immediacy of the preceding utterance, and nothing that stimulates consideration and discussion; it holds no subtlety or critique. It does, however hold remarkable affective power and often heightens the experience of both the participant and the recipient of the accolades of noise^{lxv}.

To clap by oneself is either a mockery or a sign of insanity, to not clap within a clapping crowd is the same. Do we long to hug the figures in front of us, or are we performing our alignment, bolstering their power in a cyclical fashion while maintaining distance, all the time sacrificing our reserve and restraint?

Clapping is also associated with the magical transformation and mystically significant. Magic tricks are framed with clapping, as are some Shinto prayers. The clap announces, and brings the human world into the world of the supernatural (Needham, quoted in Connor, 70). As demonstrated in J.M. Barrie's appeal to the children of his audience by having Peter Pan ask the children to clap to bring Tinkerbell back to life, clapping renders fantasy flesh (along with being a cheap trick to elicit audience support). Simple, quiet belief is not enough; silent faith does not make fantasy real; only the collected, public phenomena of clapping, the loss of reserve, rationality, restraint and voice, animates fantasy.

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Within the magical world of politics^{lxvi}, noise is often coached to erupt at specific points. Talented speech writers and public speakers know these points and deliver them flawlessly, intuitively backing off the microphone to let the noise ring and beginning at the moment before the applause sinks. We in the crowd also know when to participate. We know the buzz phrases and talking points, we can hear and feel when our anticipated moment has arrived and the irrational

part of human nature is given license to come forth. As clapping slows time and freezes the moment, and the a-rational nature of politics is unleashed, what fantasies are being brought to life?



At some moments of auditory engagement, we part take in what Idhe labels as ‘co-presence’, where at least minimal distance is maintained. In these states of imaginative listening we insert our commentary into the moment and percepts are formed. As we perceive events, intellectually, affectively and viscerally, we add our own thoughts, sculpt the moment to suit our own narratives. Although we are surrounded by fellow members of the pack, when we inevitably separate, straining the relationship that affective politics works hard to render immutable. After the experience we are left with the narrative of the event, shaped by both the phenomenal external sensations as well as our own internal narrative, which is liable to change as it is enfolded^{lxvii} within the circulation of tellings and hearings of the story, visions of similar events of television, and reports of other similar events, contextualized and analyzed, chopped and screwed by political talking heads.

As the texture of our memory changes, the sensations of the events trickle back into the mind’s recesses and are not physically recalled, and the noise of those immediately around us is replaced by the memory of nondescript noise from any other crowded event in our past. In Connor’s words, the sound has passed thorough us, leaving us with our own memories become as they enchanted. Indeed our minds are influenced by these *charms and incantations*^{lxviii}, the fuzzy memory of massive sound and feeling, enfolded by their repetitions as our presence at the event fades. The affect of the event changes us in a lasting way, but we also co-narrate that change,

enchant ourselves and turn these events and happenings in our memory. We perpetuate the mythic phenomena of being there, of experience, of feeling the event and momentarily giving ourselves over to the pack in political unity and the choreography of noise and silence. As the candidate makes noise, we are silent, attentive to every word, although through our world of instantaneous connections, we know each word before it is uttered. As we respond with noise, the candidate is silent, observing as the throngs participate in this irrational activity and collective anonymity that they do not.

For Attali, music in its primordial form was control of noise (the unwanted, uncivilized), control that would have taken the form of murder before music took place. The domestication of dissent, revelry and reckless abandon, unfit for society, ended in ritual sacrifice. Now, that act of violence has been sublimated, and its new form is the performance of music. Music takes over and controls the actions of dissent, and is silenced, placed back into the recesses as power once again exerts itself.

Contrary to Attali, or rather post-, both sides participate in noise and silence in an intricate interplay rather than a binary. In the cosmos of an event, the noise of the pack is reigned in by the noise of the candidate, as they must listen to be subjugated. Indeed the a-rational nature of politics amounts to the exchanging of noise and silence as a free multi-switch circuit. However, the effects of this circuit are aimed at the *You*, which closes the circuit just short of being inclusive, leaving the candidate as the excess, a free radical. The pack and its noise/silence is duplicated, reproduced and recreated to increase the pack and transfer the affects. Power no longer seeks silence and admits noise as a symbolic practice, it cultivates noise to create the *You* that hears itself, co-hears itself, and ultimately is propelled to its own sacrificial behavior in the form of democratic

representation, although the ghosts of the *You* remain after the election. Remember: **You know this grassroots isn't going to stop once he's elected. We're gonna be right there with him**

That Other Noise, the Forgettable but not Easily Forgotten

If noise is generalized as the unwanted, uncivilized or unfit, it is also the common, ignorable and unimportant. While noise in relation to music takes on the imagination of the oppositional, the negative and the uncontrolled, noise in everyday life can also be in the background, almost unheard except when listened *for*. White noise, although technically a theoretical construct, is such that frequencies are equal in power, resulting in a sound that is non-descript, without texture. It is also something that does not hold interest, is without merit and does not require true investigation, but rather is worth getting rid of, filtered out and generally ignored. In the absence of a full, complete or true signal, there is often noise, murmuring in the background, audible in moments where there is lack.

John Cage met with the noise of his own nervous system and the blood coursing through his veins when he attempted to hear silence in an anechoic chamber^{lxix}. For him, it gave ease, the future of music was far from being in jeopardy; there was always already organized noise, it is part of our fabric, our being, life itself. There is noise everywhere, but at most times there is also a signal to take us away from that noise.

Much of the political rhetoric is noise – sound bites, slogans, talking points and punch-lines. They are worn down to the point of having little traction and have little practical application. When they are genuinely new, or attempt to be, they are re-run and repeated to the point of saturation, they are made into noise or rather woven into the existing fabric. Over 80 years ago,

John Dewey observed that solutions to national problems are seldom as easy as politicians make them seem. Most require extraordinarily complex solutions, the workings of which are either beyond the comprehension, or require more time and effort than most the electorate is willing to give to understand and make informed decisions about^{lxx}. The solution to this political problem, while still satisfying the ideals of US-style liberalism, is to campaign on familiar slogans, party affiliation, personal resonances, moral metaphors^{lxxi} or some variant of false or misleading advertising, be it oversimplification, re-direction or nefarious conjuring. In chronicling early US political activity, Gary Nash describes a kind of slumming it with the locals that politicians participated in when they were in need of votes. Only on these occasions did they frequent the bars and taverns of the working classes, the unwashed masses, to partake in libations and sway the hearts and hands of their constituency, while strenuously avoiding the minds and the voices in their pursuits.

During this campaign I became a devotee of The Daily Show with John Stewart, steadfastly watching the previous evening's episode online during lunch. In October, he had friend and fellow political satirist Bill Maher on. When discussing the political climate, Maher commented that he wished Obama, left nameless but described as 'Our Man', would take off the gloves. To many of us, the Obama campaign's disciplined focus on the issues was frustrating. We wanted the inconsistencies and contradictions of John McCain's appeals to the Christian Right to be exposed. We wanted Sarah Palin's caricatured patriotism to be held in relief to her participation in Alaskan separatism. But, it did not happen. As the accusations piled up, Obama spoke of the economy and policy. Immigration disappeared, as did an immediate end to the war in Iraq. They became noise, the unwanted distraction. But as election day came, we looked back on the attacks – paling around with terrorists, Muslim, inexperienced and dangerous, Marxist and Socialist – and realized that they too had become noise. They were irrelevant, forgettable and without traction.

Months before, McCain had jokingly said that he didn't know about the economy, that he still needed to be educated. At the time, it was sidelined in favor of talk about national security and patriotic rhetoric. The blogosphere latched on to it, but most seemed to shrug it off. It was just Noise. Then it happened, the growing housing and banking crises, the events that changed it all, threatening a financial/ideological system that had been developing and spreading its tentacles like a predatory rhizome. That off-handed comment was replayed as the political theater of

economic hardship exposed its Iago and discovered his plot, his lies and deceptions. Noise became signal, a clear signal that translated into clip after clip on TV, on line, and during political discussions at the office. Pollsters began to ask questions like who do you trust more with the economy more often than the matching national security query. The numbers game began to change in response to the new signal. What was once just noise – simply something else that John McCain had said on the campaign trail – became a sharp signal, one that may have contributed to his resounding loss in November.

Noise has a history of becoming signal, and remembering Henriques, these two are not easily separated, for they are implicit in their opposite, in flux. In our political-auditory realm, the folds are constantly changing and resituating, sometimes with glacial slowness, at other times dropping and re-stacking like a house of cards. As these layers reformulate, they modify our perspective, re-make our realities and alter our structures of feeling and understanding, realigning our priorities, giving us new vocabulary, re-tuning our ears.

In the fall of 2008, the sub-prime crisis and record fuel costs, which triggered the failures of financial institutions, the merger and nationalizing of banks worldwide, and a meltdown of the manufacturing sectors in the US and abroad, re-folded the cloth from which the presidential campaigns, as well as other local and national races, are tailored. The focus of the campaigns moved away from other debates like immigration, choice, and national security, and moved towards the economy. The sonic environment was substantially altered as the economy, which had been an audible background hum, a standard but unexciting portion of speeches and press conferences, became the exclusive focus, and perhaps the tie-breaker between the two candidates. Debates and press conferences changed focus, as did polling and the discourse of the pundits, both accusatory and defensive. Our ears were re-adjusted to pick up sound bites on the economy, economic stimulus and government oversight by the SEC, where we had ignored them before. The noise of economic discourse became signal.

You: Combining Noise and Signal

At this point, after two years of research and fieldwork, I might be tempted to say that behind politics there are lies and abuses, false promises, unrealistic expectations, and untenable optimism; maybe I could say that the *You* of politics is a phantasm, a meaningless slogan, or a ghost. I might say that all is for naught and that the *You* that is created is just as soon disbanded and that the leviathan moves on at its own pace with or without *You*, impacted only at rare moments and always manipulated by the hands of power, *them*, of which *You* will never be a part. Instead, I will offer this – that the *You* of politics is a chimera composed of noise, a creature with two types of flesh, two beings in one, both distinct and individual, but intertwined and existing together rather than in opposition.

The noise of the unwanted caste and the ultra-ordinary variety are both opposed to a clear and distinct signal. For signal to be differentiated from noise, like an utterance, it requires that the signal be social in nature, be separated from the always already existing noise, and in congress with the always already existing world of signals. The *You* in itself is noise, it is made noise through the empty repetition and meaningless appeal. But, it is also signal, it figures into political percept as the creator of its own noise. It participates in making noise into signal. By receiving political noise and returning crowd noise, J.M Barrie's fantastical charm, simply and enthusiastically clapping, makes fantasy real.

You is many creatures, an elusive ideology and a self-realized existence. It is multiple types of noise, some that make it impossible to be other, others that brings groups into communion

and conversation, and the useless banter of ideologies that never were, the remains of stillborn rationality. As the *You*, we listen to ourselves and create the affects that transform us into further incarnations of the *You* that spread over miles, along electronic seas and digital skies. We agree to be addressed as such and consent to being spun by the noise, the feeling and the emotion of the event. We partner with strangers and produce noise to feed on, to hear and feel ourselves amplified to the point of being outside of ourselves, physically shaking the ground that we are standing on. The affects of this inner/outer noise transform our memory and impact us so deeply that we remember and fold narratives from the past and the future into that moment.

We are an active part in both our own deception as well as our creation. With our own noise we realize creation – turning noise into signal – and exert tremendous power over the movements made by political actors. Without our noise, we relegate their political rhetoric to mere noise. We can not render it silent, but we withhold efficacy and contagion. Statements that do not elicit noise are quickly disposed of in favor of new experiments. These potential intensities exist inside each other in perpetual play and are subject to forces of all varieties, like other noises. We lead a noisy existence, and we are both its creators and subjects.

Epilogue: The Elephant in the Room^{lxxii}

While we look back at the events of the past two years and forward to the political battles being fought in Washington and in Statehouses around the country, we often choose to see the workings of Democracy, either in execution or violation. But in recent offhanded comments made by a suffering opposition, veiled references to fascism and totalitarianism have been made. While the tenets of these remarks hold little water, the underlying question is one of potential interest. In his seminal essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin writes

briefly about perception changing as social circumstances undergo modulation. Despite assertions that political movements like Fascism and Monarchy have made little impact on US politics^{lxxiii}, changes in modes of consumption, particularly of mass media/social networking enabled by the proliferation of the internet, have caused metamorphoses in social conditions. In the nearly two decades years since that statement was made, has fascism become a possibility in a nation so steeped in liberalism?

The best effort to tackle this question should be done not by asking an absolute question, but by referring to the history of Fascist politics and its manifestations and asking if they are manifest in modernity, perhaps in altered appearance. For example, the possibility of a single individual, like a Fuhrer, ruling supreme in the US is not likely and certainly does not seem to be a possibility at this current juncture. However, are there substitutes or alternate incarnations and are our conceptions of Fascism stereotyped^{lxxiv}? There is a distinct possibility, as critical scholars have pointed out, that Fascism allows for public forms of resistance and alternate expression while still wielding the greatest power of all: making itself disappear into the fabric of the everyday.

While this is not the specific place to interrogate this question in its entirety, my current concern, that of noise, is involved in this debate. According to Benjamin, Fascism's goal is to preserve the exploitative system of property while allowing the victimized masses of this system a mode of expression. He states that, "Fascism seeks to give them [the masses] an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life," (241). Later in the he gives an extensive quote from Italian Futurist Marinetti on the beautiful aesthetics of war, which he cites as the logical out come of Fascism, the spectacle of watching our own demise with aesthetic pleasure.

There are a few points that this essay brings up that are worth fleshing out in relation to a particular noisy campaign season. First, of course, is the fact that politics are thoroughly aestheticized, of that there really is no question. Advertising culture, the celebrity system and their stylings have run rampant over politics, aestheticizing everything in their wake. The delivery of speeches in front of a mural of swaying US flags, the donning of lapel pins, dramatic entrances and exits to grand or popular music, slumming in neighborhood bars and breakfast joints, public prayers, and stylized photos that sell magazines are ample evidence not only of this occurrence, but its commonplace history in politics.

Benjamin also equates the celebrity system with the ‘spell of personality,’ which acts in much the same way as the magic of the commodity. Those whose visage graces the silver screen are both obscured and up close as the theological aura or art is replaced by the phony spell, the fetish, of the commodity. The best acting, according to Benjamin, is appearing not to act, to appear as part of the natural world, as the unfettered self in honest prose. The boasts of honesty, integrity and trust are in fact the spells cast by politics in the age of mechanical reproduction. Political oratory can be noise as it is endlessly pumped out, but when it fully reaches its potential, it is powerful magic.

This then brings me to my final point: what of the expressions that are allowed to the masses under Fascism’s plan to blow the gasket of dissent while maintaining the engine of private property? On this point, I have reservations. Noise, while being a powerful affective machine, fails en route to being an expression of any certitude. While it is true that Manetti and other Futurists aestheticized the sound of the machine and war as noise, it was then of an entirely different sort. Noise in their sense was articulate, it articulated the sounds of both the present and future as Europe moved to colonize the world and bring industry with it. The sound of war was the aesthetic

of dominance and control, singular purpose and ultimate sacrifice. Fascist noise was that of the machine, man manipulating steel or manipulating man with steel.

Noise in this context is inarticulate and to some extent ultimately unfulfilling as a release, necessitating future exchanges. Even as the sonic embrace, as James would have it, an affection without nuance, clarity and dialogue is destined to be fruitless and failing to produce the false release gained from being subjecting others to your noise. This cacophonous blob of supporters is not an independent machine in itself, able to be manipulated by power, but part of the machine of popularity and dominance. While the spectacle of thousands rallying dumbstruck and mechanically articulate in front of one ethereal leader may revive feelings of dread and fear of totalitarianism, the noise that is produced is far from being a full expression of the masses and is not the sound that that can paradoxically aid in the partial silencing of dissent. Noise may be a particularly persuasive expression of emotional dedication and support, but its mechanical reproducibility and fickle nature reduces the impact that it has at the point of production, necessitating *spin* rather than just rhetoric. The more articulate collective and individual expressions of which Benjamin may be referring (it's difficult to tell since he give no examples, but Currid gives many examples of common expressive culture that did not fit or promote Nazi ideology) perhaps served as a better expressive valve, and ironically allowed for a more total control of social life than the noise of fervent applause does.

This is not to say that the shadow of fascism does not loom particularly large as politics goes global and instant networks now play a task in the fabulation of political giants. Now more than ever does the possibility of totalitarianism loom as sounds, images and ideas go viral and reach the far recesses of the unknown. However, the ultimate harbinger of the new Fascism can not be noise, it will be silence. As our machines grow quiet and faintly re-organize and regulate

our lives, Fascism seeks to imitate the machine. In that endeavor it will become small and reticent, and we will find that we can not live without it.

^{xlii} Bakhtin, M.M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Also see Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

^{xliiii} The Sapir-Whorff hypothesis most basically theorizes that our reactions to the world, as well as our greater, overall abstract worldview is deeply shaped and impacted by the language(s) that we speak and use to describe it. This theory was ridiculed when it was first introduced but underwent a renaissance in the 1980s and is now an understood part of much of social linguistics and linguistic anthropology.

^{xliv} Ladd, Serow and Shannon, *The American Polity Reader*. NY: Norton, 1990. Introduction.

^{xlv} See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, Minnesota, 1996 or Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 7 1990. Appadurai identifies the ways in which information and ideas flow across prescribed boundaries, one of which is through electronic means, or 'technoscapes'. Although state boundaries are not what Appadurai had in mind, given the specificity of both campaigns towards specific states and demographic groups, in many ways this theory applies to the operation of 2008 presidential campaigns.

^{xlvi} Connor, *Feel the Noise* in Hoffmann, Gerhard and Alfred Hornung, eds. *Emotion in Postmodernism*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1997.

^{xlvii} The prisoner's dilemma is a situation where two co-suspects are interrogated separately and have to choose between selling out their co-conspirator and gaining leniency or not speaking at all and accepting the consequences. The Dilemma is that if one prisoner chooses silence, then there is a chance that the other will opt for a plea. In this particular situation any unintentional release of information or an abrupt change in situation can tilt the tables dramatically.

^{xlviii} Nash, Gary, *The Unknown American Revolution*. NY: Viking 2005. Historian Gary Nash chronicles pre-1776 revolutionary activity, worker uprisings and individual acts of resistance and protests, which he claims set the stage for the American Revolution. For a modern rendering, see *Street Fight*. Marshall Curry Prod., 2005.

^{xlix} Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985. All Attali references are to this particular text.

^l See Connor, cited above. In relation to radio, see Brian Currid's (2006) *A National Acoustics*. Currid's complex discussion of radio in Nazi Germany, while pushing against totalizing notions of 'Nazi Music' also reinforces the notion, shared by many at the time, that control of the airwaves was a key battle ground. Also see Bryan McCann's (2004) *Hello, Hello Brazil* for a similar discussion of radio in Vargas-era Brazil. Likewise, Tricia Rose's (1994) *Black Noise* and Norman Stoltzoff's (2000) *Wake the Town and Tell the People* deal with control, albeit temporary, or space through extreme amplification of music.

^{li} Hegarty, Paul. *Noise/Music: A history*. NY: Continuum 2007.

^{lii} Henriques, Julian. Sonic Dominance and the Reggae Sound System. In *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Bull and Back, eds. NY: Berg, 2003.

^{liii} Connor touches on this element of noise, but moves towards its definition as undefined and irregular sound, following Helmholtz, leaving space for noise to take on yet another cultural meaning as the over-represented, mundane and forgettable.

^{liv} Erlmann, ed. *Hearing Cultures*. NY: Berg, 2004. In the introduction, Erlmann expands on hearing: "...it is possible to conceptualize new ways of knowing a culture and of gaining a deepened understanding of how the members of a society know each other." Pg. 3.

^{lv} Quoted in Connor, *Feel the Noise*, pg. 149. Connor, Ihde, Erlmann, Henriques and Stoltzoff all address the connection between the ear and the body.

^{lvi} *Feel the Noise*, pg. 151, quoting Connor, 1997.

^{lvii} Barack Obama's campaign was particularly adept at photographing and taping him in front of crowds. His campaign videos, especially in the final month of the campaign and in his longer on-line ads, often showed him speaking to throngs of thousands or surrounded by supporters on the street. Their framing of his image on tape is quite remarkable, very artistic and persuasive. There is even one video that is tagged on youtube as 'highlights from the Obama movement,' quite a telling phrase about the campaign's self-conception.

^{lviii} Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*. NY: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1962.

^{lix} Theorists Deleuze and Guattari state that "*affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man...*" in *What is Philosophy*, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994, pg. 169. They go on to address these blocks of sensations as living beings that leave their sensor changed. I find this theory particularly apropos in relation to emotion because emotions are defined in multiple sources as being temporary and inevitably fading or quickly changing. In relation to this, affect has a more lasting transformative property.

^{lx} Idhe, Don. *Auditory Imagination*, from *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Bull and Back eds.

^{lxi} The idea of getting spun is taken up in depth in chapters 3 and 4. I describe this ethnography as the experience of getting spun, being enfolded by the ideas, buzz words, talking points and emotions of some other project or interest. The experience of getting spun not only changes one's opinion, which is the definition in the business terminology, but also involves the incorporation of the discourse, structures of feeling and affective tendencies of that interest. As a mechanism, getting spun is one of the key a-rational elements of the political campaign – it brackets rationality altogether and searches to produce opinion, feeling, emotion, affect and action.

^{lxii} In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari define percepts as nonhuman landscapes that are constructed by humans and are brought to life through them. Their theory is conspicuously lacking in sensitivity to sound that is part of the landscape, like the crashing of waves or the rustling of leaves. I use their concept of the percept with the caveat that sound is an essential part of the affective power of the percept.

^{lxiii} Ibid. p.179

^{lxiv} Connor, Stephen. *The Help of Your Good Hands: Reports on Clapping*. In Bull and Black. Full citation

^{lxv} In the following chapter, I address the issue of dumbness as it applies to modern political culture.

^{lxvi} In chapter 4, *Political Magic*, I delve into the enchantment, mysticism, transformation, illusion and self-delusion that are an integral part of political campaigning.

^{lxvii} See Deleuze, *The Fold*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Deleuze likened the fold to a labyrinth and to cloth. The labyrinth of the soul was infinite and could be indefinitely explored, which I liken to the revisiting and re-telling of memories, which inevitably are changed by different social factors. The other definition is equally appropriate: the ways in which objects are folded together, like cloth. The folds re-contextualize and re-make the partner as they do themselves, fitting together and shaping new perceptions, viewpoints and positions.

^{lxviii} Definition taken from www.wordnet.princeton.edu: influenced by charms or incantations. DELETE

^{lxix} Cage, John. *Silence*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1939-1961.

^{lxx} See John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954.

^{lxxi} Lakoff, George. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

^{lxxii} I thank Prof. Jim Buhler for this pun, and for his guidance with this section and indeed much of my ideas in this report.

^{lxxiii} Serow et al., *The American Polity Reader*. NY: Norton, 1990.

^{lxxiv} Brian Currid (2006) points out that expressive culture and its mechanical apparatuses in Nazi Germany were sites of contestation even late in the Second World War. What this opens up is the real possibility that what we fear about Fascism, its absolute power and control, is not its exact manifestation and in fact Fascism persuasive articulations may be common, even *normal*.

Deafness

My first assignment when I started at the party was to read and enter data from a series of Town Hall Meetings held around the state by the field director. The questionnaires that were collected at each of the meetings were given to me to log in the answers to the set questions and to compile the free responses to the query of Further Concerns. Most of the questions had to do with the party itself, how to better serve local communities and to outline local issues. I diligently logged the information onto spreadsheets and word documents.

A year later, I went back to the field director and asked her about the information, trying to decide if the feedback from the meetings would be good preparatory information for Rick Noriega as he criss-crossed the state in search of votes. Perhaps knowledge of local concerns would be helpful.

Those town hall meetings were just to let people bitch about us to us. The Field Director told me when I asked. That info is worthless, I wouldn't waste your time on it. We just wanted to give them an opportunity to say what they needed to say to us face-to-face.

Perhaps the unsaid part of this statement was that they didn't really listen. Information provided to the Texas Dems was turned into either a numerical statistic or it was disregarded. It exists somewhere on a hard drive as evidence of the encounter, and maybe that encounter alone did serve the purpose of letting people vent and produced a feeling of being heard and incorporated, but in the end the specifics were to fall on deaf ears, and the feelings of those sentiments were homogenized - bitching. Concerns over construction projects in Fort Worth, attracting young voters in Lubbock, and moving the Democratic Party away from its 'godless' image in Austin ceased to matter as the order of the day was votes, volunteers and money...and venting. In this articulation of deafness, feeling is stunted, affect flattened and voices converted into numbers, saved in binary codes, somewhere.

■

Deafness is the state of being unable to hear, through physical defect or physiological damage, permanent or temporary. Those who suffer from deafness are cut off from aspects of the sonic world, communicate through different means, and experience life in other distinctly different ways. Their sound perceptions are fundamentally different from those who depend primarily on the ear, although Don Ihde (1976/2003) and Steven Connor (2003/2004) remind us that the hearing impaired, as well

as those with cochlear hearing, perceive sound through other non-cochlear resonances in the body: limbs, chest, and teeth. In many cases, deafness is accompanied by an intensification of the sense of touch to compensate for that loss, as in the incredibly sensitive tactile reading of Braille. The sense of touch also replaces the ear as a means for listening to the vibrations produced by the sonic world. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this synaesthetic association of hearing and feeling is a deep part of modern campaign processes (which will be revisited in the next chapter, *Affective Politics*). The simultaneous hearing and feeling, often aimed at an oceanic wash of enthusiasm through feelings and emotions that are stimulated by deafening and ground-shaking sounds, plays with spectators' senses of empathy, passion, identification, supplication, anger...^{lxxv} The fact that these sound-feelings are often participatory intensifies their affect on both the individual and the group.

Deafness also holds within its definition a selectively chosen state, an expressive move towards the unwillingness to be persuaded or moved by an argument or plea (most often in relation to *reason*). Murray Schaefer warns that "Countless dictators have fallen because they failed to detect the sounds of revolution soon enough. And probably an equal number have been hurled into power by bawling multitudes who couldn't hear their own voices. The deaf can lead the deaf as easily as the blind can lead the blind."^{lxxvi} In the case of this form of active (non)listening, the auditor chooses not to be stirred by such appeals as logos and pathos, often because of a single-mindedness, an insatiable drive. In effect, the organ of the ear does not move the emotions, it does not rendezvous with tactility to touch the auditor. Not only is the auditor deaf, but also by design they do not feel for or with an other^{lxxvii}.

Contrary to early assumptions about the passivity of hearing forwarded by, among others, philosopher of the human condition Rousseau in *The Origin of Languages*, this deafness is active. I choose to focus on Rousseau here, and in this chapter, because his *Origin* forms a crucial starting point for theories of empathy that enfold Connor's, and have strong resonances with those of neurologist Antonio Damasio in the following chapter. According to Rousseau's own narrative, primitive people progress towards civilization by conquering both deafness and dumbness. This necessitates the taming of sight, which inevitably deludes primitive man into fear and hostility. Alternately, the ear and the voice stimulate the imagination to feel pity and empathy for an other, rather than to innately dread them or to confront them in warfare. While Rousseau explicitly classifies hearing as a passive act, his narrative implies that early humans actively controlled their feelings of fear and sublimated them into empathy through actively modifying their hearing and sight. They no longer saw other men as giants and saw not competition for resources, but opportunities for communing, particularly in passionate acts. Rousseau's theories, like Connor's, explicitly combine the ear with feelings, emotional touching that is felt before the physical act touching, driven by desire. However, Rousseau himself has inadvertently proved that the ear part of the synaesthetic relationship of hearing/feeling is *not* passive, attendant feelings are not automatically triggered. It remains quite possible to be deaf to feelings as well as to reason.

The political implications of deafness to verbal appeals and by extension public affects are vast. In our US modernity public affects are pedagogically shaped though mass media^{lxxviii} and political and commercial advertising campaigns are indistinguishable. But the honored dictum that the customer is always right meets its

match in political deafness. This strain of deafness is nothing but a sonic-metaphorical manifestation of an age-old conundrum: does the electorate desire a candidate who will vote in their stead – popular politics – or a candidate that is ideologically similar to them and will vote their conscience (or party, or specific interest, etc.)? Both forms have the potential for a kind of deafness. The former, a deafness to sensible argument, ideals and ideology. The most famous example, popularly cited in current conflicts over same-sex marriage, is that segregation was unpopular and would have been sustained by popular referendum. The political courage to force equal and civil rights legislation and desegregation necessitated deafness to popular opinion^{lxxix}. The latter is a case of deafness to the popular voice, the people, the constituency, the system of representational government by literal (and narrow) definition. In this case, the politician is only capable of hearing themselves, which Idhe reminds us is often deeper, more resonant and profound than when heard externally^{lxxx}.

In the conjunction of hearing and feeling, humans communicate with both each other as well as imagined worlds^{lxxxi}, developing affective communities and resonant modes and structures of feeling that promote and support different types of community. As these communities interact with political society and enter into public spheres, these modes of hearing/feeling are put to the test. At points, these nodes of communication and sensation, a mainstay of the multiple theories of the public and political spheres, are hindered by deafness. Politics in a state of deafness is a practice that not only does not hear, but also does not feel.

And what of deafness' attendant, dumbness, the state of being unable to articulate comprehensibly to an other? How do these competing notions of voluntary and

involuntary deafness affect the meaning, perception and production of dumbness? Is the speaker dumb, unable to articulate, speaking gibberish? Or is the auditor deaf by choice, only selectively hearing? The binaries of hearing-deaf and speaking-dumb are much more complex than they appear to be, with each related to the other, rather than two separate categories. Like deafness, dumbness can be a permanent or temporary state and does not in either case preclude alternate modes of communication. The category of dumbness may be doled out by the deaf, those who simply do not, or do not want to hear, or are fundamentally unable to understand and comprehend^{lxxxii}.

For Rousseau, the creation of language is driven by emotions: love, hatred, pity and anger, rather than by necessity. Before spoken language there was communication of the most basic and closed type. What circulated with language was expression and with writing, ideas.

▪ Synaesthesia ▪

Rousseau first theorized the synaesthesia of pathos in his book *Essay on the Origin of Languages* in 1781. In his imagination, communication outside of the primitive organization of the familial clan, the birth of language, was driven by desire and enabled by the reflexive feeling of pity (empathy, depending on the translation), pathos. The ear is the organ that moves us to be touched by an other, as the eye was the organ that caused us to fear the other. Passions are expressed through attempts at communicating with others who were unfamiliar, most often driven by the emotions of fear, love, anger and

distress^{lxxxiii}. Responses to these emotions, in the form of reciprocation or aid, were the direct effect of empathy in the auditor, who knew of burning desire, paralyzing fear, unquenchable anger and helplessness.

In the opposed poles of the North and South, the two case studies of the *Essay*, the first utterances are **help me** and **love me**, respectively. Both query and elicit a response of heightened contact, often of the physical nature (Rousseau assumes a great deal when he imagines consensual love relationships between passionate beings). For Rousseau, the desire to make physical contact with an other necessitated the participation of the voice and the ear, the three senses working together. Rousseau even goes on to fault sight for mistaking and imagining other men as adversaries, menacing creatures that strike fear into the observer and cause him to flee or to attack on sight. Initial contact at a time when sparseness of population made contact less regular was not to be made through sound, but by sight, leading to a state of sustained and permanent warfare, even though the world was at peace due to sparse and mobile populations.

For Rousseau, sound plays only a small role in the early existence of primitive man, as they communicate by gesture and only within small clans and bands. Primitive communication by gesture was, in fact, deaf to an other, acquiring a voice and an ear with the need for passionate expression, accompanied by reflexivity and emotion in the self. When they sublimate the fear they feel when confronted with the sight of their fellow men into curiosity, they are forced to find ways to express their needs and desires, and language is born through hearing. With this organ is also born empathy for fellow man, coming to their aid in distress and to their arms in desire, reflexively recognizing the

plights of others, and civilization is born. The necessary element for small bands of humans to bond together is the synaesthesia between sound and feeling.

Connor's "Hearing Edison's Teeth" investigates the multiple associations between sound and touch, mixing both the physical and emotional meanings of the latter^{lxxxiv}. Connor expands on the intense corporeality of sound and its junction with feeling, both physical and emotional in relation to sound's legendary and mythical ability to manipulate both mind and matter. With this philosophical conjoining of hearing and touch, the synaesthetic association of the distanced (but not objective) sense of hearing and the equally visceral (moist, dirty and imprecise) sense of touch are combined into a joint sensation which is simultaneously distant and immediate. Because neither sense, is endowed with the objectivity that sight is, it also follows that the affective interpretation – selective or oceanic – of all sound is contingent^{lxxxv}. On one hand, all sound is disembodied, depending on travel through the spaces between producer and auditor, and subject to manipulation and distortion^{lxxxvi}. On the other hand, feelings are intensely subjective, even though there are demonstrable culturally-specific patterns. This opens up a window for a discussion of the variable intensities that sound exerts on the mind and body, feeling and emotion.

For Connor, sound is uniquely associated with the feeling of pathos. Hearing the other's pain in the form of outbursts or cries from deliberately applied stress, often to the body, causes a similar feeling in the mind of the auditor, although their own body is physically untouched. This resonant audition is associated with physical presence – being in the proximity of a disaster, catastrophe or its aftermath where one is close to the sounds of pain. Through this encounter with the sounds of suffering and distress we are

touched, literally and metaphorically, by the anguish of others. To this might be added the Rousseauian dimension of pleasure, the physical reaction elicited by the sound of physical joys reaching the ear, the elevated elation of a celebratory event, or the sexual pleasure of a passionate encounter. In these extreme opposites, the culturally primed auditor can enter into the feelings of an other, have similar stirrings and reactions in both the mind and body even as they are not in direct contact with the event from which the sound originates.

While these sensations of hearing/feeling are modified by literal and virtual presence, they are by no means affectively impeded by mass media^{lxxxvii}. Instead of desensitizing us with its proliferation of images, narratives and personalities, mass media acts as an ongoing pedagogical experiment, testing to see what sells, what creates intensities and affects, and then mass produces it until it is obsolete, or the next model comes along. The constant searching and honing of the personal interest story and the virulence of talk radio and biased TV political commentary give credence to the statement that while electronic mediation may limit proximity, it does not completely dull the emotions. If these mediums did not continue to pedagogize with pathos, they would simply have failed as business models. De Zengotita insists that mass media actually pedagogizes us into ways of public feeling and maintains structures of feeling over vast and massive cultural shifts^{lxxxviii}. Rather than flattening affect it channels it into overarching structures whereby those who were not in proximity of an event get a God's eye view and become participants in the tragic (or the celebratory), crying along with those caught in the drama, widening the affective net and making proximity only a broadcast away.

Politics: Deaf and Dumb

Deaf politics does not mean that its practitioners can speak coherently but are not heard; and dumb politics does not necessarily mean that its practitioners can hear but are unable to articulate coherently.

*A man named Barney Smith testified for Obama at Investco Field. He was a slightly portly man with a bland mid-western voice appropriate for a man who had, in fact, spent his life in a town called Marion, Indiana. He talked about the opportunities for factory work in Marion in times past, how you could walk into a factory and get a job the same day, a job that he could not only live on, but buy a house and raise a family on. His narrative went on: the plant he worked at had been shut down and his job shipped overseas. Then the commentary: **Republicans talk about putting country first, but tell that to Marion, Indiana. Finally, the kicker: We need a president who puts Barney Smith before Smith Barney.** The crowd went crazy, people jumped out of their seats and started cheering **Barney! Barney!***

It would appear that not only is the GOP not listening to Marion, but that they are not speaking to Marion...or is Marion not listening? Or are they talking past each other in a micro-Babel, where vocabularies are not shared and speaking turns are not established, with neither side realizing it? Perhaps it was Barney Smith who became deaf to the appeals of the Republican Party and of their policies, or maybe Smith is dumb, making GOP apprehension of his problems impossible, although they are obvious to him and others in Marion, Indiana. To Smith, the GOP's words no longer touched him and his actions both at the convention and supposedly on polling day were the product of hearing Barack Obama as well as feeling that Obama heard him, understood his problems and offered solutions. Smith had the feeling that Obama heard and understood him and could solve his problems, inspiring him to renounce his party, no small task, and to speak out publicly on behalf of Obama. The feeling of being listened to led Smith to speak to an

audience of over 70,000, bringing us to a fevered pitch in a swell of visceral, corporeal and participatory sound and feeling.

The Problematic Binaries of Analysis

In *People of Paradox*, Michael Kammen uses a sound metaphor when writing about a ‘contrapuntal civilization,’ the contradictions inherent in the legacy of US political culture that move in opposite directions. The dual nature of the claims to “majority rule and minority rights...consensus and freedom, federalism and centralization,”^{xxxix} leave little room for the selectivity of hearing and speech that modify these simple dualities. What keeps political deafness and dumbness from fitting into these binaries – with their counterparts hearing and articulation – is that they are not absolute, but slippery, contingent and selective. It is not that the political sphere is deaf, but that deafness and dumbness muddy many of the exchanges, both interpersonal and formal; they exclude certain populations and discourses and limit the production of commonalities.

Along with Kamen’s political splits, other the contradictory binaries of both US culture and capitalistic modernity in general are well documented, sound seems to have slipped through the analytic cracks^{xc}. Perhaps it is because the interplay of sound does not fit easily into the binary structures that mold the contradiction-style argument, which itself is embedded in the analytic image of a Socratic/Platonic dialogue and Hegelian/Marxist dialectics. In this image, there are two sides of a coin, two oppositional voices at play, a protagonist and an antagonist, or a specific auditor and a specific

intended speaker, even if these two are synecdochic or representational in nature. These binaries are clean, neat and resolute, they do not contain an outside nor do they account for how listening and speaking practices impact a two-way interaction.

In this vein, Murray Schaefer asks if sound is where it produced or where it originates^{xci}. This begs the question of articulation versus audition, a binary indeed, accompanied by the Bakhtinian query (among many similar queries along the same lines) of the social nature of language and interpretation. Schaefer's question of sound might indeed resemble a semiotic structure in which there is a 'pure' sound in the middle, encased by intent on one side and interpretation on the other, both impacted in turn by discourse, history, etc^{xcii}. However, this model disregards the mode of hearing in of its interpreter, assuming, as linguists with language and ethno/musicologists with music, that the auditor hears the sound as it was produced, and that the sound produced was in fact done in a manner that is mutually intelligible for both parties. This binary does not include deafness, the chosen state of being unwilling to listen, or to selectively listen, and dumbness, a state of being unable to articulate to an other (and, following Husserl, Derrida or Damasio, to the self?^{xciii}). If both of these states were to be injected into the binary of producing and hearing, the outcome would at best be a messier, if not impossible, state of blurred sound and *selective* (and probably not accurate or objective) reception. It also begs the question of alternate or less effective modes of communication, similar to Rousseau's gestures which were the idiosyncratic mode of communication among small bands of primitive man. As stated earlier in "Political Noise", clapping is a form of communication that is in many ways dumb, or only minimally articulate. These

additives and excesses of deafness and dumbness make a pure binary of political sound in the form of singular production and direct reception impossible^{xciv}.

This element of the auditory culture of US politics then begs the question: how does the auditory culture of the US political sphere function? The imagined situation of representative democracy assumes that there is a line of communication, either by policy, identity or sentiment, through which elected officials enact the wills and respond to the needs of their constituencies. Theories of the public sphere that prescribe its role as reasoned and public debate surrounding and influencing policy and public well-being also assume a sonic atmosphere of listening and articulation, especially when they refer to debate and dialogue. Nowhere do the models, theories and concepts of the public sphere allow for or theorize the possibility of the deaf or the inarticulate. Nor do they wholly make space for the dumb. As Nancy Fraser summarizes in her critique of the public sphere, many have been and are excluded from the public sphere, leaving to form separate spheres. Fraser assumes that those who are disenfranchised leave the sphere to either form their own or cease to participate. What of those who continue to participate but whose intricacies of opinions, concerns and needs are unable to be articulated to the others in the power class? This deafness/dumbness plagues political practice and complicates conceptions of the public and political spheres.

Deaf and Dumb in Texas

In many ways, these interplays resonate with different phases of the political process as I experienced them in the middle-section of the machine, the Texas State

Democratic Party, as well as in everyday interactions with grassroots politicians. The state party acts as a hydraulic that takes orders from the National Party and individual candidates' campaigns and transfers them to the grassroots organizations and electorate at large, and vice versa. It is one of the many bodies that lie in between the governing and the governed. The conditions of deafness and dumbness circulate through the entire political apparatus from top to bottom, shifting roles as the situation goes through its normal and abnormal fluxes and vicissitudes. Most often, especially in times of intense crisis, those who work for the party are relegated to either deafness or dumbness, but at other times, they also do their share of selectively listening and inarticulately expressing.

At points those at either end of the hydraulic, the electorate and the ruling class, are deaf. Anything that is said to them is not heard or comprehended, no matter what it is. They become beings with no ears – they perceive through sight and touch, hearing only what they want to hear and dismissing attempts to touch them through argument or plea. They refuse to listen and contemplate what is articulated directly to them. At other times, we who were in the middle of the two groups were dumb, unable to express ourselves publicly or officially, standing at the sidelines awaiting crucial decisions and motions, able to express ourselves to each other but not in any way that will affect the business of politics. At other times, we were deaf, soliciting answers that proceeded to bounce off of our tympani and dissipate into nothingness, leaving behind the only auditors' false satisfaction at being listened to, or their frustration of having their words fall on deaf ears.

■

It was primary/caucus day and the phones were ringing like crazy – there were six of us manning the phones and still sometimes the phone rang five times before one of us could pick it up.

Texas Democratic Party, how can I help you?

There was an exasperated woman on the other end. I asked for her name and location, she was in Harris County, one of the largest counties in Texas by population and a battle ground. Home to large numbers of minorities – Asian, African American and Latino – as well as a large portion of Texas' economy, it is a county divided in many ways.

The woman on the other end was enraged. As I had been instructed to do hours earlier, I copied all of her information down and listened to her story. She told me that the Republicans, who controlled Harris County, always allotted the worst polling places to the Democrats.

I drove past the courthouse in a Republican Precinct where they vote and there was no line anywhere. There was a huge parking lot. Over here, we've only got ten parking spots for thousands of folks that want to vote, to exercise their rights, in a free and democratic society. They won't let us, and our own officials don't do shit. Folks are giving up before they even vote because they can't find parking and they're walking off of the line because it's too long or moving too slow. I can't even reach our county chair. I tried. I'm just calling you so that you know what's going on, so that you can do something.

The call proceeded in that fashion and lasted over 20 minutes. When I got off the phone I walked out of the cubicle to get some air. I took my information sheet to my supervisor. Is there anything illegal here? I told her everything I had heard, as best I remembered it.

No, don't worry about it, *she told me.* There's nothing you can say to make her feel better, they just want someone to hear them, they just want to talk. So what do I do? Just listen, tell them you'll pass it on to the legal team. They don't want to hear anything else from you, and you don't need to say any more than that. It doesn't matter that we had nothing to do with it, they just want to say their piece, it's your job to listen. They just want someone to hear them.

They do not call to listen. It doesn't matter that we in Austin have little to nothing to do with where voters in Harris County go to cast their ballots, and if we tried, it would most likely be met with equally loud protests. I tried to tell her that, tried to tell her that we're not the ones to call, but my voice fell on deaf ears.

●

It was another slow day at Rick Noriega's office at the Travis County Coordinated Campaign Headquarters. All that was left to do was to fold and stuff hundreds of envelopes with invitations to an event in Dallas and another appeal for campaign contributions. That day, a volunteer had shown up and had been directed to Rick's office. We were given our instructions and sat down to do the busy work that compromises most of the less sexy parts of the political process. She was probably in her late 30s, a professional turned stay-at-home mother of a cute but demanding and rambunctious two-year old. As we started in, we made small talk. She was anxious to let me know that she had done a ton of this kind of work before, as well as other mundane tasks like block-walking and flyering, so she was familiar with the ordinariness, but necessity of it all. She was experienced, and apparently entitled to opinions based on that. The topic floated through various politics stuff – campaigns, poll numbers, policy and projection – and then hit a snag.

There had been a hearing a few weeks before that on the now-infamous Texas Two-Step, the uniquely Texan process of having both a primary and a caucus to determine the allotment of electoral votes that go to each nominee. This had caused confusion, prompted a spate of legal challenges, and birthed anger that went up to and through the Democratic National Convention. The Chairman even convened hearings around the state where experts and activists, as well as the general public were invited to testify. Most of the uproar had to do with Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote, but coming out with fewer electoral votes because of the caucuses, which favored Barack Obama. Claims of unfairness and discrimination ran amok. Clearly this woman was one of them.

I think it's just unfair because it disenfranchises older voters. Like my mother, she can't drive at night. She can't go out and caucus at 7, especially since some of them went past midnight.

So your mother didn't caucus?

She did. I drove her out to her caucus. But what about other senior whose kids are not around?

I think that it's a faulty argument that the two-step disenfranchises seniors. I'm not a senior, I can drive at night and I couldn't caucus because I had to work. And to the best of my knowledge, the night shifts are populated by people who are working, not seniors.

Yes, but I think it's harder on seniors.

I don't see it that way, I think it disenfranchises groups differently – older and younger, working and retired, and disabled. It's pure politics to point to one group. It's Clinton propaganda because she feels like she got robbed. I'm sure there were plenty of young people and black people who didn't get to caucus either. Trust me, I know a bunch of them.

I still think that seniors were disenfranchised by the whole system.

At that point I gave up and changed the subject. There was no point in having a discussion, all she was looking for was a sounding board and a voice to agree with her, the words that were coming out of my mouth fell on deaf ears. Besides, the convention was loaded with seniors. They were not totally disenfranchised.

○

Does anyone out there (in Washington) listen?

With public opinion mirroring Harry Truman and Richard Nixon's darkest days, it was surprising to no one that George W. Bush continued to make decisions in the same way that he had when his popularity was soaring above the 90th percentile: on his own. Numerous times he insisted that the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan was improving, contrary to statistics and with incredible deafness to the political bickering and ethical lapses of the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces. He pushed for sustained tax cuts despite a growing deficit, and pushed for a 700 billion dollar bailout of Wall Street firms, an incredibly unpopular move, which reared the ugly head of lack of oversight within mere months of being rammed through Congress. At the same time that lawmakers in Washington were passing the Wall Street bailout, their own constituencies were enraged, asking where the money was for their own bailouts – debts, mortgages, loans, the rising cost of living.

But at the same time that there is outrage, there is a silent resignation. After 9/11 when Bush ordered preparations for war and the creation of the Department of Homeland

Security, the press asked many questions of those who chaired defense and intelligence panels. Those who fielded the questions, like Jay Rockefeller, said that they were privy to classified information, the nature of which would change many opinions if it were to be made public. That information was withheld, but at the time, it seemed like a decent answer. Terrorism was real, it had manifested here and perhaps it did really need to be dealt with. When it came to the bailout, there were myriad voices for, against, and against but resigned to the necessity of it. But the legislation passed with little more than a whisper of formal dissent. There were no mass actions in the streets, no protests or strikes, and angry posturing on the floor of the Senate and House was slight. Many complain about it, and it will no doubt remain a topic for close scrutiny, but more than anything else, there seemed to be a resignation that Washington was going to do what they were going to do, and that the voices and arguments of *ordinary people*, as the press is so fond of calling them, as well as key economic experts, were simply not going to be heard. Their utterances would only fall on deaf ears.

Or perhaps the voices of dissent were articulated in a language that was not mutually intelligible, too different from that of power to be understood. It is impossible to diagnose with simple deafness or dumbness; perhaps it is the interplay of the two that results in these perpetual stalemates, half-measures and exclusions. Do they fall on deaf ears because they are not loud enough or because those who are charged with having their ears to the ground are tuned in to other sounds? Do these whispers not travel the distance to Washington intact? Do they arrive at all, or do they arrive modified and distorted to the point of illegibility? Are some voices louder than others? Skeptics might claim that money is louder than words, that the economic interests of corporations and

lobbying groups steamroll human and environmental well-being. Perhaps money does talk more loudly than any metaphor or aphorism. Others claim that Washington is ‘out of touch’; the sound of the voice and the feel of touch bundled together in alienation from the circles of power, Thomas Hobbes’ utopia of Reason turned on its head^{xcv}.



Deafness and Dumbness run contrary to conceptions of the political and public spheres. In fact, the public and political spheres necessitate precisely the opposite: open and receptive ears, clarity of speech and expression, the ability to mold opinions, and to form coherent collected actions. Even if there is a dissenting minority, the comprehensibility of their dissent is assumed. Part of the dialogue and discussion that Habermas grants to the early bourgeois sphere, as well as the exclusionary and illusory manipulated public spheres of modernity, presuppose a degree of cross-communication, a shared vocabulary, a socially constructed system of meaning. Even some of Habermas’ deepest critics retain these characteristics. While Nancy Frazier opens up the possibility of vocabularies that do not correspond between the always present variety of different public spheres, she allows for coherent dialogue and debate within these individually formed units^{x cvi}.

Only in Habermas’ more pessimistic sections concerning the growth of the Public Relations industry, the transformation of journalism into public relations, and the creation and coercion of public spheres by giant private interests known as corporations does Habermas even hint at the phenomena of one-sided hearing and speech. His own

assumptions of the public sphere where citizens gathered as equals to rationally debate issues of public interest and to mold public opinion is surprisingly akin to Rousseau's festival atmosphere, where human communication and unity flowered, uninhibited and unabated, although only for brief periods of time. When Habermas does allude to miscommunication, he presents it in a model that is typical of the Frankfurt School, a top-down model that pits the capitalist interests against those of the proletariat. This is achieved by manipulating the state through operations that benefit corporations that are presented and sold to the proletariat as desirable, the *spinning* of the proletariat.

What strikes me as odd about these models, as well as being incongruous with the political experience, is that while there are shared vocabularies that tend to be only mildly exclusionary – like economic and investment terminology – by and large the assumption is that those who are gathered together in debate that seeks to move into the realm of effective action communicate *in a two-sided way*. This is even more true among those who theorize the public spheres of disenfranchised or marginal groups. But within these models of alternate spheres, is there truly open dialogue that is both articulate and heard clearly?

Within the small confines of the Texas Democratic Party, Rick Noriega's Campaign, and a host of activities that concerned Democratic of 'progressive' activists, donors and the political establishment, it seemed that deafness was a part of the overall culture. Even among a group of people who publicly share party identity and affiliation as well as a sense of common good and progress, the unwillingness to hear and listen was an outstanding characteristic. The action of not being heard then leads the speaker to

wonder if in fact they themselves are not dumb, speaking in a way that is unintelligible. In either case, the answer is not clear.

Although I have only given two vignettes, I could fill a chapter or more with stories of angry callers during and immediately after the primary/caucus. The row was so loud that the Chairman of the Party convened a series of hearings around the state to consider the implications of the two-step and consider future changes. I find it ironic that within democratic political space the chairman needs to call a special set of places where stylized hearings take place. While these meetings were open to the public and were recorded, they were not a place for dialogue. Selected experts were called to testify and were asked specific questions by Royce West, a state senator from Dallas. Following these testimonials, the microphone was opened up to comments by those attending, but it was a place for posturing and anecdotes, not dialogue, as testimonials were given and not reflected upon in public.



Where do we end a chapter on deafness and dumbness? Do we end with Rousseau's optimism – civilization ascending from the conquering of deafness and dumbness, and with that move, a move towards, dare I say Oceanic, empathy and feelings for others? Or do we end with Habermas' pessimism – that the cooptation of the public sphere is complete, including the appropriation of the free press by private interests: manipulation of public opinion has triumphed over reasoned debate among equals. Now individuals stand flattened into numbers, rather than speaking citizens, by modernity.

Where do politics in a deaf and dumb state lead? I can only say that a conquering of deafness and dumbness will most likely move politics, but one can only speculate if they will move towards a new utopia or a new hell, or perhaps into wholly uncharted territories beyond our imagination.

^{lxxv} The ‘oceanic’ feeling described by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1961), associated with religion is an apt descriptor in an age where searching for the next president takes on the air of looking for a messiah, especially in hard times when it seems only a savior will do. Talk of being part of history, making history, etc., amply demonstrated in this past election are like the feelings that Freud describes of being one with the external world, within reach of immortality, but without a guarantee.

^{lxxvi} Schaefer, Murray in Bull and Back 2003, pg. 25.

^{lxxvii} It is not that they do not feel at, “In De Man’s Kant... intellectual freedom from emotion constitutes its own emotion.” Terada, 2001, 52.

^{lxxviii} See Buck-Morss, cited in chapter 1, and Thomas De Zengotita, *Mediated*, for specific discussions on media and affect.

^{lxxix} Whether or not this is truth or hyperbole is unclear, as there is no specific data to explicitly bolster that claim. Never the less, it has been used to frame the necessity for unpopular legislation.

^{lxxx} Idhe, 2003.

^{lxxxi} The imagined worlds of both Arjun Appadurai’s diasporic and trans-national populations, as well as Benedict Anderson’s nascent nationalists, are operational within politics as empathy is doled out to the electorate. The mystical visions of Appadurai’s subjects, whose conditions of possibility are expanded by modernity-tinged imaginations, are similar to voters who envision a nearly utopic future on the heels of their candidate. Anderson’s vertical connections between unknown citizens are manifested at nearly every political rally with its fervent nationalism/patriotism.

^{lxxxii} In the following chapter, neurologist Antonio Damasio (1999, 2003) presents the argument that understanding social life, and therefore having a sense of self and one’s own place in it, are inextricably tied to feelings and understanding the feelings of others through external cues, like sound. Following this argument, metaphorical dumbness, or the category of being inarticulate or incomprehensible, can be a symptom of a lack of sensitivity on the part of the auditor. Also, philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) raises the problem of speaking past each other – if our very categories and understandings can be so different as to preclude any debate. Indeed this seems likely in our culturally and materially divergent world, and it might follow that both deafness and dumbness both characterize (non)attempts at communication and raise the question of cross-cultural empathy.

^{lxxxiii} Jean-Luc Nancy (1990) reminds us, in writing about the Bataille, that true passions exceed meaning and are impossible to hold within any such a repository as language.

^{lxxxiv} Connor, in Erlmann, 2004.

^{lxxxv} While the dated notion of the objectivity of sight has been multiply criticized, little work has been done to resuscitate hearing to the level of objective verity of sight, however modified that may be.

^{lxxxvi} The manipulations of sound were a favorite element of entertainment magic in the 18th and 19th centuries. Leigh Eric Schmidt (2000), Steven Connor and Simon During all detail the devices used to disembodied and distort sounds, particularly voices, to the amazement and delight of audiences.

^{lxxxvii} In reference to Frederic Jameson’s (1991) statement, in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism*, that post-modernity is affectively flat, Rei Terada responds that feeling in modernity has simply changed. After the death of the subject, declared by post-structuralism and post-modernism, public feelings, and the nature of feeling, have taken on the very nature of subjectivity itself. It is constructed,

fractured, pedagogized and prone to excesses; affect is, as Damasio implies in his work, intersubjective and socially dependent. Perhaps we can not define affects, but we can clearly demonstrate their effects.

^{lxxxviii} De Zengotita, Thomas, *Mediated*. 2005

^{lxxxix} In Serow et al., 1990, pg. 24.

^{xc} For a comprehensive, albeit dated study, see Daniel Bell's (1976) *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*.

^{xc}_i Schaeffer in Bull and Back, 2003.

^{xc}_{ii} Although this diagram is not unique, the model that I have in mind comes from J. J. Nattiez's (1990) *text Music and Discourse*.

^{xc}_{iii} As interesting as this may be, I do not believe that this is the place for an extended, extensive discussion on the clarity of hearing the self. That will have to wait for another time in the very, very distant future.

^{xc}_{iv} This semiotic model is often referred to as the bullet theory in Media Studies and has been deeply critiqued. For a summary, see Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney, *Mediamaking: Mass Media in Popular Culture; Part II, Making Sense of the Media*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998.

^{xc}_v Hobbes, in his lengthy political treatise *Leviathan*, envisions a rational form of government, free from the detrimental forces of superstition, conjecture and imagination and driven by reason. This reason, with echoes of Socrates' final speech, would not be affected by dramatic and sentimental pleas, appeals to pathos or other 'unreasoned' utterances and practices. In light of Damasio's work on the social necessity of emotion, it seems that Hobbes' rational utopia would indeed be deaf and dumb, and by extension, unfeeling.

^{xc}_{vi} Nancy Frasier, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Already Existing Democracy'. In During, 1993.

The Passions of Politics: Affect, Empathy and Sound

*Paul Begala made us feel **good**: about being Democrats, about being part of an historical movement at a critical moment, about being there, at that time, at the beginning of something big, something for the ages^{xvii}. He blanketed the growingly divisive rivalries within the Democratic primary by complimenting all of the players. He cited the talent pool that appeared to run against Gerald Ford after Richard Nixon's downfall, saying that the immense talent in the 2008 Democratic race was no different, they were a caucus of true heavyweights. He openly supported Hillary Clinton without denying the merits of Barack Obama, John Edwards, Joe Biden, Bill Richardson or Chris Dodd. He had us mesmerized with his stories, about the Clintons, about growing up in Texas, about his son. He heightened the mood, brought the room of hundreds to laughter with his impersonations of and personal stories about President Clinton, and to tears with his poignant tales of triumph and victory over hardship. Through it all, everyone felt – we were touched, angered, proud and moved. And we felt good about all of it.*

*He ended with a story about country and religion. The son of a Polish immigrant, he is a devout Roman Catholic, so much so that he named his son John Paul after the then-sitting and beloved Pope. As advisor to President Clinton, he was able to get an audience with the John Paul II. He eagerly shook the pontiff's hand and told him that he was his son's namesake, about which he humorously commented – **my son and thousands of others**. On that trip he brought his mother, fulfilling a dream of his and a fantasy of hers. In the car on the way back from the Vatican to their hotel room his mother was almost speechless, quietly saying **Only in America**.*

▪

Only in America: a mantra of great significance. Only in America could a Polish immigrant find her way into the presence of the Pope. From *The Great Gatsby* to Bill Clinton and John F. Kennedy, and from Caesar Chavez to Bernard Hopkins and now to Barack Obama, public dreams and stories of triumph are framed by these words. They resonate deeply in a nation built on immigration, both free and forced. Abundance, redemption, transformation, and victory live in the minds, on the tongues, in the sounds and images of this nation's history and lore. These words make us feel deeply, experience emotions that bring us to tears, make us tingle with warmth, and revive memories, real or

fictional, of our own narratives within the American dream, and enable us to craft our own fantasies^{xcviii}.

We are profoundly re-shaped, re-made and re-imagined by this mantra, this enduring phrase. As individuals and a community, mass, nation and borderless community, we who listen to these three words move ahead differently than before, our minds' eyes staring longingly into an imagined future shaped by this message. I was reminded, sitting in the back of the Austin Hilton Ballroom as Paul Begala preached the word of the Nation, of my own place in this leviathan narrative, and my own hopes and dreams that are fueled by these three words, words more volatile than the matter which realizes them. The undefined, uncontrollable and ineffable impact of this phrase exerts force and intensity in ordinary, everyday life, igniting passions and transforming cultural practice beyond meaning and material^{xcix}.

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It seems that over the last two years, I heard this sentiment more and more often. From motivational speeches like Begala's to the aftermath of Barack Obama's acceptance speech, where a country song of the same title played, one could not escape these words, if not this sentiment in some other form^c. Pundits, when faced with the seeming contradiction, or strange coincidence, of this song being used by both the George W. Bush campaign and the Obama campaign, stated that this song indeed epitomized the Obama campaign, and also Obama's own personal story. Some even included Joe Biden's story, a working class kid from Scranton, Pennsylvania who went

on to become a powerful senator and now vice president, into the narrative of the song. Did it do the same for George W. Bush? Can two men (or three) of such differing backgrounds, personal narratives, beliefs, and visions for governance find resonance in the same four twangy chords, two stanzas and a chorus?

Perhaps the answer lies not in the words or the style, the appeals or the embodiment alone, but in the affect of the imaginative images of self and nation, of the narrative, the *percept*, of the knots of feelings and emotions that do more than just lead us to enthrallment. They appear at a time when we are ready to be spun and leave us fundamentally changed in a way that endures past the event itself^{ci}. They are part of a living memory that does not recede into the back pages or take its place in the attic of the mind, it exerts force and intensity and weighs on future action. At a particular juncture, we hear these words and sounds and are ready to be affected, receptive to the blocks of feelings and emotions that are sculpted in the moment, of which sound is an integral part, ready to become something apart from ourselves^{cii}. We are swept up in the wave of which we are the water. Outside of the rigors, rhetorics and discourses of self-interest, public policy and the common good, we *feel* politics and are guided by affect in our relationship to and with them^{ciii}.

In the end game of political campaigning, we are left with the remnants of the Enlightenment efficiency and the logic of capitalism: the rationalization of action and instrumental reason. Each action must be efficiently executed, lead to a planned and definitive effect with as little variation as possible and must end in a specific goal, ultimately leading to the casting of ballots and a winner by majority. Within these pursuits, the temporariness of emotion is a desired outcome, as the Iowa Caucuses attest

to^{civ}, but the real prize lies in the ability to maintain those emotions and feelings, perhaps not in their heightened state, but in a way that is both long-lasting and tangible – to create affect and to re-map the affective apparatus of the mind and body. Political consultant Jim Spencer is fond of telling his candidates as they plan their campaign events, often on a shoestring budget: *you are looking for three things – votes, volunteers and money*. These are the material aspects of the campaign, fueled by affect. All three of these require different levels of commitment, and much of that commitment is demanded after an initial encounter with a candidate in person or through media. Those on the campaign trail across vast spaces need the affect of the encounter to be sustained and to give rise to further actions^{cv}.

In small campaigns, a candidate can block walk, hold small scale fundraisers in backyards and public parks and use private halls like the VFW, Knights of Columbus, the IBEW or Churches to meet with constituents. Face-to-face meeting, personal conversations, and attention to local issues can sway votes, bring in money and encourage participation by personally addressing individuals. The affect of a handshake, a willing ear for a few moments or camaraderie around a grill can be enough to swing votes. In races where the number of potential voters is small to moderate, a candidate may even encounter possible voters more than once and in different places, giving them opportunity to reinforce their message and spin potential supporters.

But what of large state and national campaigns? It is nearly impossible to shake enough hands, kiss enough babies and hold enough fundraisers to meet all of the potential electorate, or even the 51% needed to win. At a second a handshake, Barack Obama would have had to shake hands non-stop for all two years of his campaign to get the over

66 million votes that he received. Physical and emotional touching – the creation of affect – must be done through means other than through person to person contact. It is done through rhetoric, through resonance, and through sound and image, artfully placed and masterfully used. It is done at public appearances where hundreds if not thousands and tens of thousands congregate and participate, themselves metaphorically touching the candidate through clapping^{cvi}.

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff artfully proposed one theory to explain the ways in which conservatives and liberals of different material circumstances and interests are bound together across the US: metaphor^{cvi}. Metaphors that address the internal organization of home/parental life – embodied in the strict father/nurturing parent metaphor – are what divide, define and encircle conservatives and liberals in the US, in the mid- 1990s. These metaphors are what connect individuals' ideas of how their households should be run, i.e. the ideal parent, to the execution of governance, in a bizarre synthesis of the bourgeois split between the private and public. This metaphorical arrangement also conjoins unlikely bedfellows – rural middle-American poor/working class to Wall Street elite, or the urban West Coast to the Southern Black rural proletariat, to use opposing examples.

What I find missing in Lakoff's brilliant analyses is a hint of how these feelings of association with certain political stances become actions, become actualized material political movement. How do resonant metaphors turn into *votes*, *volunteers* and *money*? My experience in Texas, if haphazardly generalized, seems to indicate that while many citizens keep their political world private and local, their modes of expression only extending through their communities and the virtual spaces of the internet^{cvi},

participation in one form or another is not uncommon and is an essential part of the practice of representational democracy. From so-called ‘opinion makers’ to community leaders, contributors, editorial writers and talking heads, campaigns depend on the involvement of citizens who take initiative, often with little to no material benefit to themselves^{cix}. If these metaphors hold within them a sense of what is morally right, right for self and country, then the corresponding affective senses, once felt, change the individual and community in ways that spur action, from the short actions of voting or donating to the sustained action of hours and months of volunteering, and everything in between. These actions are spurred by the affects that stay with us, change and spin us.

As one example, in the 2008 cycle, approximately one out of every 400 citizens in the US made a contribution to the campaign of Barack Obama, certainly mass participation. If we are to generalize the number of participants with the Obama campaign who did more than vote, those who volunteered, wrote letters to the editor, blogged, block walked, put up signs and bumper stickers and wore buttons, hats and t-shirts, we might be surprised by the number, relative to the overall number of votes. Something about this particular campaign affected citizens in ways that produced a startling amount of participation. In our culture of mass media, sub-urban (or ex-urban) sprawl and unprecedented diversity, the ability to affectively communicate in large-scale national politics is essential. Beyond old-fashioned identity politics, which are still in play (vote for me because I am like you)^{cx}, affective politics are a driving force in the US political campaigning machinery.

We all sat in the conference room of the Texas Democratic Party, partaking in beer, vodka, tequila, and jell-o shots, watching CNN and eating fajitas. On the pull-down

screen to the right of the small television a lap-top was hooked up to a projector, showing updated statistics on all of the Texas races by county. At this moment, no one was looking at the screen, all eyes were on CNN as the empty stage in Grant Park was lit up, a line of flags waiving at the back, awaiting the new president-elect. When he regally strode onto the stage on the TV, the room erupted in cheers, and then we listened. Some of the staffers began to cry, their sniffles punctuated the moments of silence in Chicago. Viewers, connected through the synapses of electrons, hung on every word, applauded and wept together in an oceanic feeling of triumph, elation, relief and promise.

COMBINING THEORIES OF AFFECT

Neurologist Antonio Damasio has researched and written extensively on the topic of human emotions and feelings. In his search to scientifically understand these phenomena he has laid out theories of where feelings exist in the brain and of how these corporeal feelings correspond and interact with the physical manifestations of emotions. Although somewhat contrary to the vernacular uses of the two terms – feelings and emotions – I am compelled to use his definitions for the sake of clarity and to interface with other works, especially those of philosopher Gilles Deleuze in his philosophy of affect.

For Damasio there are two distinct phenomena that constitute affect – feelings and emotions. Feelings are the mental aspect, while emotions are the physical aspect. Emotions are readily observed through obvious physical manifestations like laughter, weeping and facial expressions (all of which are culturally relative, but also culturally generalized), as well as subtle manifestations like elevated heart rate and blood pressure, secretion of hormones into the blood, shortness of breath, tightening of pores and sweating^{exi}. Feelings, the mental aspects, are much harder to measure without sophisticated equipment, with the exception of work done on individuals who suffer from

degenerative diseases of the brain or who have sustained brain damage from trauma (these studies also require brain scans to diagnose the affected areas)^{cxii}.

Following early American psychologist and philosopher William James, Damasio sets out to scientifically prove what James had hypothesized, that the emotions temporally happen first and that feelings are the result of emotion^{cxiii}. The sensation of tensing muscles and hair standing up on the back of the neck happens before the feeling of fear, the sense of heat on the back before anger. In *Looking for Spinoza*, he walks through various experiments in which subjects are asked to re-live affectively charged memories, listen to music that they have previously cited as emotionally meaningful, and are exposed to pictures of potentially emotion-inducing images. In these cases, the subtle manifestations of each emotion occurred before the corresponding feelings were felt, or registered in the brain. In other cases, simulating the emotions caused the corresponding feelings – smiling causes the part of the brain that register happiness and joy to become active resulting in the corresponding emotion.

However, Damasio does not stop at this raw and mechanical conclusion, that emotion precedes feeling. He goes on to theorize what can be seen as the cultural, as well as individual, aspects of this theory: the mind maps emotions on to the body, that the mind plays a crucial role in determining what constitutes the proper stimuli of emotions, and therefore feelings. These maps can be re-drawn throughout life and have the effect of changing the manifestation of emotion and the nature of what constitutes that proper stimulus for a particular emotion, but does not fundamentally alter the succession in which emotion and feeling occur.

Between Damasio's two latter books in a group of three that deal with the mind and affect, *The Feeling of What Happens* and *Looking for Spinoza*, there is a productive dissonance with regard to the social aspect of affect^{cxiv}. In the former, Damasio is concerned with the role of feelings and emotions in the making of the self, the growth of consciousness, knowing that we are feeling and that feeling is personal. He puts this in relation to the social function of affect, as he shows through case studies the dysfunctional nature of individuals whose brain has been damaged in areas that keep them from experiencing and perceiving certain feelings and therefore appropriately reacting. These lacks of feelings impinge on the ability of individuals to function within the specific social world in which they were accustomed to and at one time did function in. In multiple examples, Damasio explicates the social difficulties or unusual existences of individuals who have brain damage to specific regions of their brains that govern the production of feelings and the creation of emotion.

Looking for Spinoza also begins with the individual – individuals mapping and re-mapping the body and appropriate stimuli. However, there is an abrupt turn into the social that was only hinted at in his earlier work. He theorizes that living in functional harmony with others is part of a mental map and that these maps extend beyond the individual body and include social maps, the bodies of others. The appropriate stimuli addressed in his earlier works as being objects are potentially other social actors or social situations that produce emotions, and therefore feelings within individuals, resulting in social cooperation. He states, "The endeavor to live in a shared, peaceful agreement with others is an extension of the endeavor to preserve oneself. Social and political contracts are extensions of the personal biological mandate," (2003, 172-3).

Following Damasio's own synthetic program, this means that we re-draw these mental maps to include our own bodies as well as the bodies of others who enter into our social worlds. Our internal feelings, the things that define our individual sense of self and our relation to others, are deeply affected by the appropriateness of our own social feelings and the public emotions of others. These public emotions and feelings are the result of individuals coming to a tacit, negotiated or mass agreement on appropriate stimuli. Likewise, we are affecting bodies; individual actions can move others to feel in a cooperative and cumulative way that moves in accord with our own emotions and feelings^{cxv}. Through the act of being affected, by both emotion and feeling, we can not help but to be changed, in our actions (which will be discussed below) and in the re-drawing of our affective maps.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze, along with psychoanalyst Felix Guattari, have contributed theories of affect and becoming and a project of mapping and making connections that interfaces with Damasio's neurological theories in ways that point towards application to my current program of thinking about political campaigns^{cxvi}. In many ways, Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts, while finding a representational style vastly different than that of Damasio – the former being described as impenetrable by colleague of mine and the latter as accessible by many a book reviewer and critic – present an interplay of the scientific/theoretical and philosophical/theoretical that moves towards a more satisfying, but not hermetic, beginning to a theory of the affective practices of politics.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari examine the phenomenon of becoming, a verb that rejects similitude, mimesis and imitation, and indicates changes in both the subject of the becoming as well as the object that is its predicate. The meaning, image and ontology of the object are as unstable as the subject has become, both without a final product or a lasting end, with each proposed end degenerating into new beginnings or exploding into lines of flight and escape. These becomings are facilitated by affect – the ability of both to affect and to be affected. Deleuze and Guattari state that, “Affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel. Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant,” (1987, 240). These implications of becoming a pack, a brief loss of humanity in favor of animality and the group nature of this powerful experience resonate deeply with the presence of the self at political events where emotion runs high (this idea will be revisited below).

This notion of affect is expanded upon in Deleuze and Guattari’s later work entitled *What is Philosophy?* In the penultimate chapter entitled “Percept, Affect, Concept,” they retain the definition of affect as “nonhuman becomings of man” (169) but go on to further explain affect as blocks of sensation that are preserved in works of art and are transferred to observers as participants. These blocks of sensation are independent of the space, place and material that inspired their creation. “This something can be specified only as sensation. It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called affect,” (173). When tackling the issue of

affective politics in our mediatized age, Deleuze and Guattari's theory opens a window through which to theorize the lasting impact of a particular speech or sound bite, the image of mass rallies or the feelings and emotions that sustain participation and raise millions of dollars^{cxvii}. As scenes are created and disseminated, the affects that are made become free of the moment of production and exert their intensities on those who were not present at that moment.

Both Deleuze and Guattari and Damasio's theories of affect have the same productive tension, namely that of the individual versus the social, the theorizing of the individual within a necessarily social phenomenon. It is the same as the ambiguity that exists in the term *you*, and in the poles of individualism and federalism^{cxviii}. Deleuze and Guattari's becomings are indeed individual in the cases in which they are described and in which they happen: the wolf-man, the becoming-rat. Damasio's affects are drawn from individuals and described on the individual body (although the body is, as science would have it, universal). However, both at some point turn this individual phenomenon into something that is either multiply connected to the social, in the case of Damasio, or is outside of the individual, making material connections to objects outside of the individual, in Deleuze and Guattari. Perhaps what draws them together is the psychologism of Elias Canetti's pack, a temporary conflation of individuals generated around a charismatic leader that seeks to grow itself and move forward with singular purpose, disbanding when the leader is deposed, or when the motivation to come together no longer exists^{cxix}. Canetti's work brings the individual and group together in spatio-temporal as well as psychological terms, leaving an opening for growing and sustaining the pack, as well as its dissolve and reconstitution.

Within Canetti's pack, individuals are one step before differentiation into the mass of individuals that compose part of our ideal of society. They become the individual *you*, pre-monad, pre-election where they will become votes, then become electoral votes, then become majority, then dissipate with a tendency to re-form. In the growing pack, they are also one step away from their differentiated state, the plural *you*, being incorporated into the pack and assuming a place different than what existed before. In these re- and de-formations, there is a tendency to erase difference and to create a sense of self that is new. Following Damasio, these experiences facilitate a subjective re-mapping by the individual, changing their sense of self and perception of those around them. These monads that come together make connections and are en mass becoming together, becoming a force and acting with intensities that change the individual by virtue of the mass of others who have joined and with whom the individual is a part. They form percepts, nonhuman landscapes, pictures that are *populated* by a non-descript crowd: the crowd is inside of them, and have a sound-image that accompanies them^{cx}. These landscapes are characterized by crowds, undifferentiated, or pre-differentiated, into which we the observers have moved and are a part, and are affected by the becoming-crowd as much as our multiple presences affect those around us to become part of the crowd, part of the pack. The feelings and emotions are personal, but of necessity are also outside of us, in the ether, and act upon us.

With politics, however, there is a sustaining momentum after the break-up of the pack, when the pack no longer exists in immediacy, but retains the remnants of its once being-pack, being-crowd, and is able to be activated at another time by a charismatic leader. In modernity, Canetti's theory of the crowd stands in need of some necessary

adjustments. These contemporary tunings allow for new forms of community and affective communion, as well as modern ways for charismatic leaders to affect and transform disparate individuals into a pack that is not immediately material, but more virtually material, as well as being affectively material^{cxxi}.

Damasio and Deleuze and Guattari's work gives us a window into the workings of affect in a way that points towards action that sustains within individuals and communities after initial contact, producing fundamental changes in those involved. Throughout *Looking for Spinoza*, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, they constantly reiterate that affective experiences change the subject of the experience, as well as the object. By re-mapping the emotions onto the body and by providing the mind with new memories that serve to conjure up emotions and feelings, the affective experience can dictate future experiences in two distinct ways. The most obvious is that it primes the body and mind to be affected by similar, connected or remembered events, prolonging the impact of a single encounter (think *spin*). Secondly, Damasio's push towards evolutionary forms of logic leads him to theorize the impact of affective experience: that it directly impacts future action by priming those positive feelings that we so desire and that are essential for mental health and effective existence in society. By redrawing the affective map, possible courses for future action are plotted. Circling back to political consultant Jim Spencer's three necessities to win an election, votes, volunteers and money are possible material outcomes from affective encounters that fit onto a map of positive affect. They are actions that are the result of a positive affective encounter that take place after an experience. An exception is fundraising, which sometimes looks to immediately cash in on the emotionally charged atmosphere, like the event with Paul Begala. A third

extension grows from Deleuze and Guattari's insistence that the predicate is also affected by these becomings. By affecting a crowd, having them become pack, cultivating sustained action, the affecter is affected and becomes...president?

III

Why would you be a Democrat in Texas? It's like choosing to be a bull rider: you always get roughed up and tossed around by the larger, stronger and meaner animal, your victories are few and far between and only last nine seconds, and if it weren't for a bunch of clowns, your opponent would kill you. And those clowns keeping you alive are lawyers, how's that for irony? On a more material note, why would you work for the Texas Democratic Party? The pay is low, the job is thankless and while your power is limited in many cases, you are the whipping boy when things go wrong. I can't tell you how many angry phone calls I fielded in my time working in the office from folks who were yelling at me for things that the office had nothing to do with, let alone me or anyone around me. It would seem that any Democrat in their right mind would become a lobbyist, a consultant or a staffer, jobs that pay a little better, that are private – i.e. your phone number is not posted on a website – and that possibly give you a little more respect, that said with the exception of lobbyists who are the favorite scourge of any campaign.

*Indeed there are many who take this route. In my eighteen months at the office of the Texas Democratic Party, there was almost constant turnover. Thirteen people either left or were let go, out of an office that was at 26 in the months prior to the election. Most stayed in the political scene, becoming staffers or lobbyists. At some point, it resembles an addiction, with more and more drastic highs and lows. Once you've worked behind the scenes of politics, it's hard to go back to being an ordinary citizen. There is a rush in being there, in fighting for the win, in telling battle stories and tall tales of greatness and intrigue^{cxxii}. But to those who stayed, I posed the question – why here and not somewhere else where you could make a better living and not have every minor party official and angry citizen trying to get into your business. Perhaps the comptroller said it best: **I think of it as a privilege.** She also told me on my last day: **We're sorry to see you go, but I know you'll still be working for the cause.** At some point there's very little difference between dedication to a cause and addiction to the feeling.*

The affective tinges in both of these statements can not be denied. The more practical elements of social behavior would say that working as a lobbyist or a staffer is still working for the cause, but there is a certain affect associated with working for the party that is mapped upon those who work there. The walls are decorated with Democratic memorabilia, photos of high drama, triumph and tragedy. There are pictures of a young Bill and Hillary Clinton at the Texas Democratic Convention in 1992, two framed collages of articles about the 'Killer Ds' who drove out of the state to protest the re-districting of Texas by the Republican Majority. There are convention posters, portraits of LBJ and John and Jacqueline Kennedy. There is a candid photo of Lady Bird

Johnson, intimate and local. A stroll down the hallway, past the kitchen and copy rooms, is a stride past great history, great men, many of them Texas Democrats, or to be in the presence of something that the party created. The ordinary nature of work is to be with the ghosts of the extraordinary.

Working for the party is working in the memory of greatness and a promise, so common to our place and era, of a future of triumph. This existence maps affects onto those who work there. A sense of pride in continuing the good fight works with the ever-existing feeling of sacrifice as legitimation and induces positive feeling. It also sets up the joy of victory: the gaining of seats, winning of offices and districts, increasing participation, successful events like the Democratic debate between Clinton and Obama at the University of Texas. Excruciating, thankless labor at the Texas Democratic Convention, back-to-back twenty hour days, preceded by two or three seventeen hour days, is made into an accomplishment, a release, a point of pride. Being a part of the party changes the participants' affects and affective maps to maintain future participation, even if many of those working for the party leave. We become part of the percept of the office, the space where the lore of Texas Democrats exists outside of the actual events, a space of aspirations and dedication.

In this space, we are becoming political, becoming Democrats. We are endowed with both authority and culpability. We are ready to be affected by the past and present and we ourselves affect it in the ways that we enact it^{xxxiii}. After we are affected, we move as a pack and later each take to flight, to find another pack, another becoming.

AFFECT AND OPINION

In an interesting turn of philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari briefly turn affect in the direction of opinion.

It is precisely because opinions are functions of lived experience that they claim to have a certain knowledge of affections. Opinions prevail on human passions in their eternity. But...one has the impression that opinion misjudges affective states and groups them together or separates them wrongly. (1991, 174)

The combination, often haphazard and contradictory, of affect and opinion is one of the essences of the modern campaign. In the wake of tremendous political failures on the part

of both major parties and prominent candidates, a theory on opinion misjudging affective states is tailor-made for this particular juncture in political history.

First, a nod to Damasio: in his theory of the role of affect in human existence, he meticulously includes thought about the future. One of the deciding mechanisms of the human cognitive process is thought about the future: what will the outcome of certain actions be and how will it feel? “One of the main traits of civilized behavior is thinking in terms of the future,” (2003, 146). These anticipated outcomes are thought of as products of inductive reasoning, based on specific previous experiences and making generalizations that are themselves contingent upon constant modification from compiling experience. In the political realm, where solutions are complex and concern an aggregation of national and international connections that elude all but the most indoctrinated and sophisticated, and concern people, places and situations about which we have limited or no knowledge, we are left with the distinct possibility that opinion is formed apart from inductive reasonings and within the realm of affects^{cxxiv}. To riff on Damasio’s earlier publication, the feeling of what *will happen* is part of both the decision making process and also part of the affective re-mapping of the body and the formation of opinion. These re-mappings, as indicated by Damasio’s brief section on empathy, also concern the mapping of others’ bodies, and the extension of the affective imagination to induce feelings and emotions based on the projected outcome of decisions on the bodies of an imagined community^{cxxv}.

So what are these affectations, these becomings, that opinion envisions, but so often misses? The most obvious is the becoming pack, becoming crowd, the first necessity of a political victory. Beyond that, the creation of opinion, or spin, in part is an

attempt at instilling the vision of an anticipated of future outcome, coupled with the affects that turn opinion into action. This spin at times does not anticipate the becomings of the population at large, or the targeted populations. In this particular context, spin can work in two ways: it can anticipate and facilitate condensation around a particular issue, or vice versa; the anticipated outcome is either successfully appropriated (i.e. the population is *spun*) or it is not. There are also negative consequences: backfiring, the enabling of counter-spin, and the wasting of campaign funds and social capital on ineffective tactics.

Examples can be drawn from recent presidential elections: the 1992 campaign of George H. W. Bush did not anticipate the becoming pack of billionaire Ross Perot, leading to his loss to newcomer Bill Clinton. Bush's campaign did not foresee the appeal that Perot's personality and politics would have on a substantial portion of the population. Perot's becoming billionaire moved into becoming politician and becoming outsider that affected numerous citizens to rally behind him, despite his comical appearance and scant knowledge of the Washington political system. The opinions of millions of voters were affected by these becomings, who became the pack that voted for Perot, resulting in electoral losses in once solid states for Bush.

More recently, Hillary Clinton scored a surprising victory over unanticipated Iowa Caucus winner Barack Obama in the New Hampshire primary in January of 2008. Many pundits attributed her win to a much-publicized break in her usual stoic demeanor. At a coffee shop in Portsmouth New Hampshire, Clinton briefly lost her composure when expanding on a somewhat innocuous question about who does her hair. She teared up talking about how the country is in a backward slide, saying that she perseveres on for the

future, for the children, against all odds. The break in composure lasted only a moment in real time. She gained composure and went on to give a statement about moving forward as a nation. But this moment outlived its time, it became an entity of intensity in its own right, replayed, thanks to the army of media there to capture it, and re-hashed in print and television. Newsweek pondered if this was Clinton's 'Muskie Moment,' referencing Ed Muskie's presidential-bid ending photo of him with water on his cheek. Was it a tear or a snowflake melting? It did not matter because that particular outbreak of emotion ended his run for the presidency^{xxxvi}.

This moment was indeed unthought, impossible, and unexpected. We could only wait and speculate on the outcome, how this would affect primary voters and others' opinions. Was Clinton becoming vulnerable, becoming human, oddly enough becoming woman? Her becoming emotional may have been what swayed opinion and she handily won the New Hampshire primary in the face of preliminary polls that had her behind Obama. Clinton's brief becoming created affects that existed apart from her, from the event, and were transferred through reproduction and talk to others who in the end became votes and a win for her. Opinions of her changed, and politicians were left with only questions about their own method of anticipation, finding that their opinions had misjudged the affective power of becoming emotional.

There are also just as many cases where opinions are spun, where the affect of a leaked fact, a proposed relationship, or political stance do find traction, hold their ground and spin the politically inclined with great gusto. Sarah Palin: forget the contradictions, the scant experience or the track record, she spun the nation's conservatives. When she was added to the ticket, the lackluster and disorganized McCain campaign was suddenly

becoming conservative. While McCain renounced or denied many of his earlier policy stances that were more ‘moderate’, he by himself was unsuccessful in becoming conservative, and more importantly he was unable to project this affect onto potential voters. When Palin was added to the ticket, it was a marvelous becoming. This was more than simple identity politics because Palin was as affected by this becoming as were the potential voters, volunteers and money that came out to herald her arrival^{cxxvii}. Where McCain rallies were small, they were now filled with excited citizens, paraphernalia and noise – chants and cheers. The modest, family-oriented small-town politician began, along with her family, to don expensive clothing and move about the country in a private jet. Her folksy ways and off-the-cuff remarks became choreographed and her exposure more and more controlled, she was becoming a politician as the ticket was becoming conservative.

Affective Sound: Advertising

In one of John Stewart’s more brilliant Daily Show political punches, he played Barack Obama’s first national television ad. It featured a number of ‘real American buzzwords’ like faith, heartland, values, family, and love of country on which Stewart poked fun, ridiculing the cookie-cutter linguistic nature of political advertising. Stewart proceeded to then ridicule the background music, solo acoustic guitar muzak revolving around a simple tonal melody and major chords. He then boisterously asked the audience a rhetorical question: “What doesn’t sound good when accompanied by light, atmospheric acoustic guitar music?” He then proceeded to do an absolutely inspired demonstration. He read a description of the effects of mad cow disease on the human brain over similar ambient acoustic guitar music, ending with “Admit it, you want the disease now!” Apparently, the right music makes even the most horrifying things desirable.

As comical as Stewart’s commentary on political advertising might be, the truth of the matter is that laughable, shallow ads like these help to define our political culture. In a mediated nation millions of potential voters are touched by political ads like these for

both national and local candidates in lieu of actually meeting in person. In a mass-mediated nation the possibilities for virtual contact are indeed endless, but there are a few prescribed paths that are most commonly taken. Many are introduced to candidates via television, in news, para-news and advertisements. A glance at the literally hundreds of videos produced by various candidates for both local and national markets as well as the internet show a surprisingly scant engagement with policy. Most veer into the realm of affective politics, casting nets of resonance with values, lifestyle and empathy^{cxxviii}. They give their back story, and beliefs and faith, talk about their families and the locality which they seek to conquer.

Following Thomas De Zengotita's diatribe concerning television, we are pedagogized by television – made into the center of every crisis, given a God's eye view of the situation even while we are implicated in it and taught how to act^{cxxix}. Through the television (also film and increasingly the computer are becoming venues of observation, acting as prostheses^{cxxx}) we are taught how to feel and react appropriately^{cxxxi}. There are many cues – primarily visual and auditory – that are picked for their particular affect.

Former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore went 0-2 this political season. His bid for the Republican Presidential nomination stalled early on, making him the first casualty of the primary season, and he was defeated in his bid to become Virginia's junior senator. His platform of fiscal and social conservatism coupled with strong national defense and restricted immigration were not unlike most of the other candidates in the pool, but he failed to capture public attention and was unable to raise enough money to stay in the race. Much of this was because he started with low name recognition – very few outside of Virginia knew his name, let alone his record. This raised a particular problem: very few were apt to take the time early on to read about Gilmore's extensive experience, to examine his extended policy statements or to scan past articles concerning his actions and reputation as governor. At the point where the Gilmore campaign was putting its public face on, there had been little major national news coverage of the former Governor. On top of that, his conservative outsider status had been usurped by new Republican darling Mike Huckabee whose earthy off the cuff speaking, conservative

credentials, feel-good weight loss to marathoner story were all very news worthy in the form of personal interest. On top of that, he touted his potential to do battle with the then-presumed Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, as he had succeeded Bill Clinton as Governor of Arkansas.

*One of the strategies that the Gilmore campaign took was to spruce up the front page of their website. It contained a streaming video that played upon arrival and featured the candidate directly addressing the viewer, talking about his political stances, enduring values, credentials and his vision for leading America. In just over two minutes, he invoked the Ronald Reagan, who won the cold war and **turned back the tide of liberalism**, cast doubt upon the conservative nature of his main opponents, Mitt Romney, John McCain and Rudy Giuliani, and touted his involvement in conservative reforms: cutting taxes, reducing abortions and improving national security.*

*This serious monologue was all accompanied by music that was reminiscent of patriotic film score, as if it were drawn from the slow motion scenes of a Revolutionary War battlefield bio-pic. Over a static string vamp trumpets played sparse and poignant secco melodies made of long notes and swells. Gradually the low strings added rhythmic interjections and the trumpet melodies gained momentum. Then, the denouement: when Gilmore makes his call for action, the strings and winds drop out, and only the timpani, the rhythm of marching feet, is heard. **I ask all conservatives of conscience to join me in the fight for these principles. These are the principles that have made America great and have kept American strong.** The music then comes back in its heightened state. **My name is Jim Gilmore and I call on you to join me in the fight for these principles to secure American's future.** The music is an interesting combination of style and ambience: it denotes patriotism (Gilmore's blog, started after he exited the Presidential campaign, is called *The Virginia Patriot*) and is meant to be heard, especially at crucial moments, like his call to action. But it is also innocuous and non-committal, meant to be in the background. It is, in the true sense of the term, mood music mass produced for the mass production of a patriotic mood.*

*Dick Legitt has been with Jim Gilmore for years as his campaign manager and advisor. In a short conversation he talked about that particular front piece. The music for that clip was canned music, purchasable on CDs for advertising purposes from a Madison Avenue firm. When the CDs are purchased, the buyer can scan through and choose from a variety of musics at typical ad lengths, 15-30 seconds, a minute, two minutes. **Not many people know the Governor and what he's done, so we wanted to give them a sense of his seriousness, a sense of gravitas when they see that message. We scanned through the music and thought that this was the best fit for the message that we wanted. It conveyed that sense of gravitas.***

Here are two vastly different approaches to the sound of advertising. The first forwards that everything sounds good when accompanied by this generic music. Viewers are cued into the appropriate feelings of comfort and relaxation by the music, a key concern as the Obama campaign grappled with establishing trust in voters. The second

believes that this music is the appropriate sounds track for the specific sense that we wish to convey. Both follow the pattern of simplified music for the purposes of highlighting text^{cxixii}. Both have the same purpose – to attempt to unify a body of voters, a *you*, by creating an affective resonance. Both depend of keywords, one set that unifies in beliefs in God, country, family, values, and place, and another that divides and places the listener into a body of people whose ideals built America, made it powerful and triumphed against communism. Neither gives more than a shadow of policy, although Gilmore's two minutes do cover hot-button words like abortion, national security and taxes. Both search to affect, to bring interest and increased support, and both seek to be affected – to be made viable in either traditionally 'red' states or among an imagined 'base'. Both contain anonymous music, no discernable composer or identifiable marker, that holds vast connections to potent affective states, relaxation (a key affect in the eyes of Damasio's evolutionary perspective) and patriotism.

Everything Gets Turned Around: American Girl and Signed, Sealed, Delivered

Hillary Clinton's forays into selecting a theme were marred by missteps and decisions that can only be described as questionable. Her first move was to solicit a campaign song online through voting. Her campaign selected ten songs, letting the voters decide on one of the ten or writing one of their own choosing in. At the end of a week, the top five vote-getters from the campaign's list were paired with the top five write-ins. Another round of voting was held and the winner was picked from that group. In the blogosphere there were numerous critiques of this move – many holding it up to be a sign

of Clinton's bogus populism, state of being out of touch, or general false nature. One blog (I suspect that there were more) held a mock write in campaign, which sported such tunes as The Rolling Stone's 'Bitch,' Foreigner's 'Cold as Ice,' and The Who's 'Won't Get Fooled Again.'^{cxviii}

When the voting was said and done, Celine Dion's 'You and I' was chosen. This of course set off a firestorm of criticism, many citing that it was sung by a Canadian artist who had initially recorded the song as a jingle. Not to mention that adult contemporary music is perhaps not the best soundtrack for a political campaign, and not the stuff that you want playing when you strut on or off stage to the wild applause of thousands of adoring fans. The campaign eventually abandoned 'You and I' and moved into different directions. They used U2's 'City of Blinding Light,' in accordance with a utopian view of the future, and The Police's 'Every Little Thing She Does is Magic.' Both were met with skepticism carried over from the initial fiasco, and with certain familiar criticism: none of the three was recorded by an American artist, and in the most blatantly nationalistic campaign in recent years, this was a liability. The second had to do with the second line of the chorus to 'Every Little Thing,' which is 'everything she does just turns me on,' which is more than a little uncomfortable blaring from a loudspeaker when you're staring at Hillary Clinton.

The campaign eventually settled on Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' 'American Girl,' a solid Americana rock classic. Like most of Petty's music, it rings of the American heartland, open roads, and small towns. It seemed to fit. Her press materials matched the tenor of the song, as they highlighted her mid-American roots in Chicago. On the campaign train, Clinton threw back whiskey in working-class bars, and Bill Clinton

talked her up as being all-American. She was becoming an American girl. The lyrics of Petty's classic talk about being raised on promises, a great big world to run to, and promises to keep, all of which fit the campaign vibe quite nicely. Then there was the issue of the chorus which contains the couplet 'take it easy baby, make it last all night,' and the second stanza which concerns painful memories of a man, and something being so close but so far out of reach. Given her husband's past, this also seemed somewhat questionable, but it didn't seem to matter, she was made into the American Girl, and maybe the fact that her story did embody the darker parts of the song made it all the more appropriate as it was played for her video tribute at the National Convention.

When Bill Clinton came to Austin to campaign on his wife's behalf, he spoke on the steps of the Tower. In his signature charismatic way, he deflected hecklers and sold Hillary Clinton better than she could. He touted her honesty, vision and humble nature. He performed for the crowd, who were far from disappointed by her appearance. When he finished the speech, they cued 'American Girl.' It had become her song, and she had become an American girl. Best of all, this rocker was one that crowds could applaud to, one that gave them that elevated feeling of enthusiasm. It resonated with post-9/11 nationalism and patriotism, was both young and hip and classic and it moves. From the opening snare drum and guitar hook to the stadium-rock chorus it drives like a T-bird on the drag: not too fast, but with a lot of power under the hood. In 2008, affective campaign music doesn't get much better than 'American Girl'.

•

*After the rally, when we were talking, a friend told me that she had been momentarily confused by the music that closed out the Clinton rally. **At first I thought it***

was that song [by Cheap Trick] ‘I Want You To Want Me.’ I thought it was a little odd, but fitting. *We both had a good laugh imagining someone campaigning with ‘I Want You To Want Me’ as their song. ‘American Girl’ may have fit the bill a little better, but ‘I Want You to Want Me’ would have been more honest.*

▪

Despite the incredible blandness of his advertising and PR materials, Barack Obama’s campaign filled the air around their public functions with an incredible variety of popular music. At the heightened atmosphere inside Investco Field before his acceptance speech, the piped-in soundtrack was a mix of R&B feel-good classics and pop tunes. As the camera roved above the stadium, showing snippets of the crowd, the giant screens projected images of delegates and supporters getting down to the old soul and R&B. The excitement of the historic moment rode on a thumping bass, a riveting back beat and melismatic vocals.

Most notable of this shuffle was the song that defined Obama’s unlikely but inevitable rise: Stevie Wonder’s ‘Signed, Sealed, Delivered.’ The incredible love, passion and optimism of this Motown classic transferred easily onto Obama’s audiences. When this song played in the stadium, the crowd roared, and when Stevie Wonder himself kicked off the song it was mayhem as we, the throngs of *you*, jumped to our feet and cheered; the stadium shook under our feet. This song is emblazoned with the triumph of Obama, the persistence of the underdog and the rhetoric of unification after discord.

I don’t know if anyone in the Obama campaign knew of Berry Gordy’s legendary marketing scheme, to make Black music that could sell to wide (white) audiences, or his Fordist production scheme, assemble the final product in small, well crafted parts, executed by specialized professionals, all of which were supervised and overseen with

incredible attention to detail and discipline. All of these characteristics are reminiscent of the Obama campaign. What is more interesting is that the affect of Stevie Wonder's song, its becoming iconic, crossing over, reaching and touching countless audiences and affecting them through Wonder's signature sounds, deeply affected a campaign some 28 years after its release. We are left to ponder how it is that these audiences were so receptive. Did it have anything to do with age, race or taste demographics? Did it have to do with the resonances and similarities between Obama, as a political and racial cross-over and Stevie Wonder, a musical cross-over? Was it their shared history as wonder kids? Was it the right message, at the right time, with the right sound – young and modern yet vintage, just hip enough but also conventional enough, different for politics, common for a supermarket? Whatever it was, it threw tens of thousands into a state of cacophonous euphoria. For reasons wholly unclear, but subject to a million speculations, 'Signed, Sealed, Delivered' exerted an incredible, political affect on millions of citizens.

There was a bold reversal of time that night. The future came first, with an aging Stevie Wonder taking the stage and performing 'Signed, Sealed, Delivered' to a stadium full of adoring fans. What had been labeled as overconfidence and arrogance when first used by the Obama campaign in Iowa now took on prophetic proportions. When he finished his speech, the crowd roared, and before the last ring of his words had died out in the hot Denver air. And underneath the roar, Brooks and Dunn's 'Only In America' played as red, white and blue confetti and streamers poured down and fireworks leapt from the pinnacles of the stadium. There it was, the triumphant soundtrack of the past, the story that had gripped so many – a half African, half white child raised by a single mother and a grandmother, who experienced the profound loss of a parent and worked his way up through the ranks of the academy, the legal profession and the political ladder. Only in America, the reflective afterthought of triumph: it was history happening after the future. But in the space of affect, everything gets turned around.

^{xcvii} Former advisor to President Clinton and CNN political commentator Paul Begala came to Austin as the keynote speaker to a large Texas Democratic Party fund-raiser in October of 2007. This is the event to which I am referring.

^{xcviii} Also see Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*, for his theory about how globalization and media have enabled the imaginations of so many outside of the Industrialized nations to dream of possibilities that literally would have been possible previous to expanding networks of images and narratives (I would also add *sounds*).

^{xcix} I do not wish to deny historical materialism, rhetorical semantics or cognitive linguistics their due in explicating the meanings and effects of such rhetoric, my point is that any definition must always already be considered finite and incomplete.

^c Brooks and Dunn, *Only in America* from Brooks and Dunn, *Only In America*, BMG Music, 2003.

^{ci} In a lecture entitled *The Honky-Tonk Gap* (2005, 2007), political analyst Tim Firestein theorizes that the wide-spread consumption of country music in so-called 'Red States' primed audiences for positive reception of the rhetoric of George W. Bush, who not only used the music, but ideas and ways of speaking that resonated with Nashville pop like Brooks and Dunn's 'Hard Working Man' and 'Only in America.'

^{cii} See 'Political Noise' for a more in-depth discussion about the sound of a political rally.

^{ciii} Although we are guided by affect, I refuse the notion that affect is rational or can be systematized to show its intelligence, as forwarded by Marcus et al in *Affective Politics* as 'affective intelligence'. As Lakoff has shown in the realm of identifying with metaphors, by material measures, many of our affective links can be shown to be contrary or even detrimental to our material interests.

^{civ} The 'electability' talk surrounding those who succeed and those who do not in the small-scale Iowa Caucuses is an example of the affects of politics. Although the state of Iowa only carries electoral seven votes and has one of the more homogenous populations of any state, the Iowa Caucuses are seen as a bellwether of general election, a make-or-break for would-be candidates. Iowa and New Hampshire often serve to thin out the ranks of candidates, as a disappointing finish in Iowa is often a sign of things to come.

^{cv} Campaign contributions are not tax deductible, they are not a gift that keeps on giving. The money given is money that is not spent elsewhere and therefore requires some sort of – although greater or lesser variations abound – sacrifice.

^{cvi} Also see 'Political Noise' for more on the crowd (which is discussed below) and noise.

^{cvi} Lakoff, *Moral Politics* (2002).

^{cvi} While there are many arguments to be made for the idea that participation in virtual worlds extends man into the global, beginning with Marshall McLuhan (1964), in the realm of this past campaign, casual participation with local blogs and chat rooms, even talk radio, was primarily overlooked in favor of focus on the star-system of opinion makers. Catchy phrases and points of intrigue that were picked up on by state campaigns did not transcend their immediate boundaries unless they were aided by well-known outlets. Examples of this are Obama's ties to former member of the Weather Underground Tom Ayars, McCain's previous marriage, and Palin's alliance to the Alaska Independence Party. These local stories gained traction in the public political sphere because they were abetted by a star of the political system or were little more than a buzz among the faithful but did not garner any sort of national attention from either a campaign or a national opinion maker.

^{cix} Perhaps the best examples of this are the Texas SDEC and the national convention. The SDEC (Special Democratic Electoral Committee) is a group of people, a man and a woman from each of the 31 senate districts, as well as members from interest groups like Asian and Black Democrats, Labor and Rural/Ag, who meet four times a year, at their own expense, to discuss and determine the policies and procedures of the Texas Democratic Party. All of their activities, from meetings in Austin, to their obligations in training poll workers and election monitors, are done at their own expense. This is also the case with the national convention (as well as the Texas State convention): delegates travel, lodging and food is a personal expense. For the 2008 convention, most delegates shelled out close to \$1000 to participate. However, using Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital, participation in these activities does come with certain bragging rights, and the pleasure of telling the story, of standing in the percept of history being made. Perhaps Bourdieu's theories could be buttressed by injecting affective dimensions into them. A question for long-term study: are these sorts of acquisitions of cultural capital converted into capital?

^{cx} This election posed a unique challenge to these questionable practices of identity politics. Numerous sources indeed cited the initial reluctance of the Black community to support Barack Obama, partially for fear of choosing a losing candidate and having no representation, and partially because of an affinity with Bill Clinton (See *Race Over* by Marc Ambinder, *The Atlantic* Jan/Feb 2009). On a similar note, the choice of Sarah Palin by the McCain campaign raised the ire of many women who were offended by the notion that they would just vote for a woman instead of making informed decisions. This was most notable parodied by Samantha Bee on *The Daily Show* when she proclaimed, 'We [women] don't vote with the big head, we vote with the little hood.'

^{cxⁱ} Lakoff and Kovecses in "The cognitive model of anger inherent in American English" propose a theory of how English metaphors of anger, many of which revolve around heat – hot under the collar, boiling point, hot tempered – and correspond to similar physical states in people who are experiencing such an affect. While I will not pursue this particular angle, it seems that there is an opening to tie together affect, action and metaphor in a productive way that combines linguistics, neurology, sound and experience.

^{cxⁱⁱ} See Damasio, Antonio, *Descartes Error, The Feeling of What Happens* and *Looking for Spinoza*. All three text deal with emotion from a neurologist's perspective and ask separate questions about the role of emotions in human life. For this paper, I primarily rely on the latter two texts.

^{cxⁱⁱⁱ} See Paul Redding's (1999) *The Logic of Affect* for a summary of psychological approaches to affect.

^{cx^{iv}} The first, *Descartes' Error*, while interesting and brilliant, is not a major part of this analysis, as the latter two are more directly related to the angle that I wish to pursue.

^{cx^v} I will note here that one of the examples of an individual mapping onto another individual is Empathy, the same emotion that drove Rousseau's theory of the development of language and therefore civilization. In Damasio's reading of empathy (p. 115-117 in *Looking for Spinoza*) the mind maps the body of the individual(s) who are suffering on to themselves, creating a false map of the body, and inducing the feeling of empathy without the experience of corresponding emotion (usually in the form of pain).

^{cx^{vi}} D&G *What is Philosophy, A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze, *The Fold*, Rajchman (2000), *The Deleuze Connections*, K. Stewart (2007), *Ordinary Affects*. What is Philosophy has already been discussed in 'Political Noise,' with the hope of making the connections between noise and affect obvious and bringing these concepts together. Other literature that has impacted my thought on feelings, emotions and affects include Catherine Lutz (1988), *Unnatural Emotions*, Raymond Williams (1977), *Marxism and Literature*, Lauren Berlant (2006), "Cruel Optimism", Terada, *Feeling in Theory*. D&G's theories of becoming also hold deep resonances with Elias Canetti's work, which was used in 'Political Noise' and will be revisited in this section.

^{cx^{vii}} I am self-consciously hi-jacking Deleuze and Guattari's theories as they apply to the arts and applying them to politics without mediation. I am also tempted to do this to Marcuse's (1978) *The Aesthetic Dimension*. Both are centered on the transformative properties of fine art – D&G in affect, Marcuse in new ways of conceptualizing and imagining the world, our place in it and our social relations. Without sustained discussion, I will offer the often stated idea that autonomous art never was coupled with the idea that the creation of a spectacle (See Debord (1983) for a brilliant theory of the spectacle and capitalism) is a work of art in its own way. I can not deny the creativity of those who run campaigns or their ability to re-envision, create never-before felt affects, and remake the world, a power that Marcuse and D&G endow on novelists (and sorcerers, to be revisited in 'Political Magic').

^{cx^{viii}} This tension can and should be expanded upon to include the nature of civilization itself with the interplay of protections and repressions. On this, Rousseau (1967), Kant (1993), Freud (1961) and Nietzsche (2004) are of particular interest.

^{cx^{ix}} Canetti (1960), 107-8, 116. The particular processes of this pack formation are well illuminated and informed by sociologist Max Weber's (2003) essays on types of power, especially his sections on Charismatic Power, which point towards the creation of the types of formations that Canetti writes about, especially the animalistic nature, in light of Fascism, militant and violent nationalist movements from the 20th century through the present. Weber's anti-Enlightenment sentiments are most strongly captured by Deleuze's use of becomings-animal breaking down the notion that man is above nature and that reason, the ability that was thought to separate man from animal, is not a given for man and is not exclusive from animals.

^{cx^x} See 'Political Noise'.

^{cxxi} Electronic and virtual community are being theorized in new ways almost daily. As new websites like youtube, facebook, myspace and linkedin create the possibility of connecting and reinforcing connections between people and communities that have never, and may never meet. Benedict Anderson (1983) addressed this issue with print, and Hardt and Negri (2000), Agamben (1993), and Rheingold (among many others) have all contributed substantial thought to the formation and cultural poesis of virtual communities.

^{cxxii} Walter Benjamin (1969) points out that there is both pleasure and magic in the telling of stories, indeed both are a part of modern politics. This propensity for storytelling made fieldwork almost easy, as people were always willing to talk.

^{cxxiii} Through many theorists: we make history and determine its relevance to our present. See Trouillot (1995), *Silencing the Past*, Flores (2002), *Remembering the Alamo*, Benjamin (1969), "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

^{cxxiv} Two notes. First, John Dewey writes about this in *The Public and its Problems*, stating that practical solutions to political problems are often too complex for either the knowledge of any particular citizen or for the time one is willing to put in to understand the far-reaching implications of both the problem and any of its posed solutions. Second, visions of the future and their connection to the a-rational side of politics will be dealt with in far more depth under the guise of 'generalized mysticism' in 'Political Magic'.

^{cxxv} Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Although Anderson only hints at the value of affect in the nation-building project, it seems to be the logical outcome of increased exchange via technology.

Appadurai takes this idea up in *Modernity at Large*.

^{cxxvi} Breslau, Karen. "Clinton Tears Up: A Muskie Moment or a helpful glimpse of 'the real Hillary?'" Newsweek Web Exclusive, Jan 7. 2008. www.newsweek.com/id/85609

^{cxxvii} Deleuze and Guattari's becomings are perhaps the most effective terminology for discussing politics in general, given the nature of our representational democracy. Politicians are ideally expected to be responsive to their constituency and to communicate Washington back to them. Given the amount of political pedagogizing that takes place, driven by local politicians and grassroots organizations, becomings that affect both the subject and object seem to almost perfectly describe the chaotic interplay of politicians to their public.

^{cxxviii} I agree with Dewey's point that most policy is too complex for either comprehension or dedication, let alone for a 30-second to one minute slot. Political stances on NAFTA, the economy and foreign policy that were part of many advertisements are little more than opinion and do not truly present a coherent policy solution. Simply proposing a solution, especially one that seems instantly able to implement, is affective in nature, instilling feelings – fear, hope, confidence, enthusiasm, connection, resonance, anxiety – in open observers, supporters, opponents or undecided.

^{cxxix} Thomas De Zengotita, *Mediated*. De Zengotita also writes about the self-centered nature of the television generations, which resonates deeply with the political turn towards the *you*. While this may seem antithetical to the potential *we* of politics, the *you* works with the self-centered nature of politics because of the two-faced agency involved in *you*, discussed in 'Political Noise.' The *You* not only creates itself through choice, it is both singular and plural and is itself an intensity that is self-induced, as opposed to the *we* which has involvement implicated already.

^{cxxx} In a brilliant essay, Susan Buck-Morss theorizes the ways in which the silver screen became a site of feelings, how giant figures induced affects in their audience. In Seremetakis, *The Senses Still*.

^{cxxxi} This theory of affect works with Damasio's insistence that affects are both individual and social in nature – both teaching us about the self and how to act appropriately in our social worlds. De Zengotita also sees that while we are self-centered, our affects are learned, in this case from watching television.

^{cxxxii} See Gorn, Kellaris, Olsen (1997), MacInnis, Park (1986) and Anand (1988) for experimental results of comprehension of information and music in commercial and retail settings, and Bader, for experimental work on music and political ads. All of the above authors were interested in either information comprehension or preference. Information was presented in conjunction with music. Later either preferences were assessed or information was recalled for accuracy. The overwhelming conclusion was that information or text-dense ads necessitated music that was relatively static, and did not contain competing text. More affectively dense ads, like political attack ads, that depended more on making an affective associations between two objects necessitated more affectively overt music. Music also played a curious

role in comprehension. While music was a potential distraction from text-heavy advertising, text without music made recall difficult, while overt music made recall, albeit often incorrect, easier.

^{cxixiii}

www.wonkette.com, accessed 5/16/07, unfortunately this page is no longer available

Political Magic

It was hard not to be caught up in it all, to be entranced by the news coverage, the blogs, the minute fluctuations of polling numbers and predictions, the passions of those involved. I found myself staring hypnotically into the faces of Lou Dobbs, Anderson Cooper and Wolf Blitzer as they reported the day's campaign news. Even when I was at the gym or in a bar, I couldn't pull my eyes away from the news. The election dominated my conversations – with friends and family and with complete strangers with whom I crossed paths. It was like the lingua franca of everyday conversation that managed to get past the mundane pleasantness of the weather and local sports teams. At home I stared into the computer screen at the various news wires and faithfully listened to NPR, and all this after spending days at one political office or another. My life was politics, and I was far from being alone. I came to understand the term 'political junkie', and to understand why people get so enraptured by politics. Anyone who was anyone was tuned in and turned on (no word on dropping out), or at least that's what the two years leading up to the election felt like.

The race blanketed the nearly two years from the 2006 mid-term elections through November of 2008 (if you're in Minnesota, it's still going on). It was truly as if this election cycle, this showcase of fetishism, polarity, enmity, partisanship, animosity and scant consensus, exerted a special kind of force, an intense gravity. It pulled in many who had never paid attention to elections before and inspired tens of thousands to activism on behalf of their favored candidate, not to mention convincing millions to part with their cash. This moment in our history moved people in a way that we have not seen in decades, if ever, and wrote a new chapter in our history, followed by thousands of blank pages waiting to be filled with frustration, elation, disappointment and triumph.

However, this is not to say that the atmosphere was electric for two years and that I was in a state of constant stimulation bordering on rapture. This is far from the truth. In all reality, much of the time spent on politics, or in politics, is lived in a state of boredom and repetition. The minute numbers and statistics that millions of people hang on are courted and counted, gathered, applied and tallied one at a time, in tedious fashion, by worker bees like myself. Over the many hours spent at the Texas Democratic Party Office and Rick Noriega's Austin office, a bulk of the hours that I worked were spent in one form or another of data processing – tedious lines of data entry, de-duplicating different data bases, entering contact information from meetings, rallies and fundraisers, and data fishing for potential donors. Along with that were many hours on the phone, calling Democratic activists from around the state, often delivering the same message in person or to voicemail 60 times a day, or calling numerous hotels around Austin looking for price quotes and group rates for meetings or the state convention. And then there was the endless filing – putting paperwork from donors or local candidates into alphabetical order in their county files, categorizing candidate filings by the day in which they arrived at the office or where notarized. Then there were the mailings: stuffing, folding and labeling hundreds of letters that were always being sent out late, or had to be put in the mail yesterday. Near the time of the state convention and after the national convention, there were afternoons spent counting out batches of Obama/Biden signs and bumper stickers to be mailed out to the different counties all around Texas. Through all of this tedium, there was a constant stream of volunteers, at least one of us a day, who showed up at the office to work for nothing. In the last few months of the campaign, often

volunteers were turned away or left early because there was little for them to do because others had come earlier.

So what makes people like me and the millions of others around the country who volunteer their time go back to work over and over again when the work is tedious, unglamorous, and often thankless and boring? Why do the folks at the Texas Democratic Party work there when they could make much more as a staffer or lobbyist? The answer is far from simple. Perhaps it is dedication to a cause or organization, a belief that you are helping to make a difference in any way that you can. There is also a belief in the Party, that what it represents is right, is going to benefit everyone, it going to benefit the person working there. Beyond that, there is always the hope of moving up – volunteer today, precinct chair tomorrow, county chair later and possibly an elected position with some power and prestige, moving from a position of responsibility to one of authority.

After the election, much of the Texas Democratic Party office did leave for jobs in politics that were more lucrative, less intense and more prestigious, most staying in politics.

Then there is the possibility of just being there, being close to the place where it all happens, for the thrill of it, for the cultural capital of it, for the mystique of walking the halls of power, even if they are covered in ersatz oak and paved with cheap carpet. Finally, there are those moments when the magic happens, when the new president elect glides onto the stage in Grant Park and even through the television you feel a tingle in your spine. There's the moment when you get to shake hands with men and women that you've only seen on TV or heard on the radio, and even though they would not recognize you in five minutes if you ran into them on the street, you still tell your friends that you got to meet them. There's the time when you're in the audience of events that you usually only hear about and when the crowd roars and you're responsible for your small voice in the throngs, swept up in the waves of sound and feeling.

These magical moments are why we keep coming back to the mundane – because the future promises more and better, if we only give ourselves. Politics is a magical entity with mysterious promises and premises that keep the faithful coming back, ensnare souls who dedicate themselves to the duties of the party and move tens of millions to devotion and dedication in the form of votes, volunteers and money. Its magic extends backwards as it enchants history, makes myths of men and erases its own tracks. It also visualizes the future, organizes its conditions of possibility and predicts the outcomes of its own actions. Politics is mythical and mystical, it has immense creative powers in both material and imagined realms, holds the power of transubstantiation and transformation and is theatre par excellence. It has the power to manipulate and delude, to trick and swindle. Most of all, politics is magical because it makes us believe. Just as the miracles of holy books made believers out of heathens and barbarians, the magic of politics, when well performed, inspires renewed faith and vigor, both lasting and momentary.

MAGIC

A search of the term magic yields two inevitable results: one that refers to real and potent magic that summons or bears the characteristics of the supernatural; and one that is trickery, sleight of hand, smoke and mirrors, but may be thought to be the former

by naïve observers^{cxv}. These two magics, which have also been parsed into sub-categories and sub-fields, are more often than not in close companionship with each other, and not directly opposed, as one might assume. In the introduction to *Modern Enchantments*, Simon During gives one of the most pithy critiques of this aspect of the Frankfurt School, and Theodor Adorno in particular. During sees Adorno's critique of modernity as too dichotomous – that the social life is being rationalized and that enchantment with the natural world, theology and tradition are being replaced with the enchantment of rationality, numbers, efficiency, commodity, scientific and quantifiable knowledge, and order. To this During points out that it is not a dichotomy that characterizes modernity, but an intricate interplay, a dialectical dance of disenchanted and (re)enchanted that alternates between the two. Although I don't share all of During's optimism – he states that the mode of magic consumer's gaze is of their choosing, that they know when they are being tricked and willingly delude themselves into believing in the illusion – I do believe that we live in an age where both enchantment and disenchantment partner and swirl about. But this is not a tango, with intricately coordinated steps, a leader and a follower; this is a rave: dark, loud, cross-dressed and drugged. There is as much deception as there is honesty and in the haze and flashing lights it is difficult to discern which is which. Consumers of this political magic may never really know when it is that they are being entertained by smoke and mirrors and when the devil has truly been summoned. Rather than proceeding to parse out the elements of modern political campaigns which are enchanted and disenchanted, I prefer to keep both in play, and modifying During's dictum, assume that consumers at least believe that they know which pole they are clinging to, or sliding away from.

The magical qualities of politics lay in both the presentation and the reception, in both those who propagate campaigns and those who view them from afar as observers and citizens. They also extend into visceral reactions – like enthusiasm, fascination, belief, disdain – that accompany political campaigning. Political magic is both the inexplicable effects of campaigning and the carefully orchestrated illusions and tricks that campaigns perform in front of audiences to gain their votes, money and time. Part of the magic of politics seems so *normal* that to categorize it as magic is strange, but campaigns regularly predict the future, alter the way that we see the world and our place in it, and create grand illusions about the past, present and future. Through verbal (and increasingly digital) arts they are able to manipulate large masses as the masses allow themselves to be worked into frenzy and mass displays of fervor and faith. This is the magic of politics that aim at the fabulation of faces^{cxxxv} and giants, the re-making of myth, shepherding of the imagination, cultivation of fascination and devotion, and the production of grand illusions.

Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, makes an observation of the magic of primitive man that is informative in the context of politics. He states that, “...he, the savage, possesses in himself all of the supernatural powers necessary to further his own well-being and that of his fellow man.”^{cxxxvi} Indeed politicians echo this claim, that they, in themselves, contain the wherewithal to make crucial improvements to the local, national and global. In modernity, especially since the 1950s, media-driven campaigns have changed the face of election cycles. The magic potency of the individual must first pass through the electorate, through affect and spin, which are curiously similar to what Frazer defines as ‘contagious magic’^{cxxxvii}. Through this magic, the object (a citizen, a voter), once removed from the affected, continues to have an affect and vice versa. These effects

are produced through profound and costly theatrics, mediatized events, manipulation of the massive gears of spin and have life beyond their immediate performance if done right.

Like magic shows, however, there are also doubters, and any number of nay-sayers who attend shows to deconstruct, debunk and critique both the performers and the naïve minds of the believers^{cxviii}. There is also magical transformation, transubstantiation, mysticism, myth, self-transformation and illusion, and of course, theater, presentation, pyrotechnics and magical incantations. Beings are sung to life, chanted to power^{cxix} and transformed from men into immortals. At some point, the distinction between what is real and illusory falls away and all that is left is the end product: the effects, the results of an election, the mythical legacy of a president, the disappointment of defeat. The power to quell serious dissent, to move mass audiences into action or quiescence, to maintain myth or byline, to harden association and alliance, or to instill lines of critique to debunk the other's potency are all part of the magic of politics. Its perpetrators are our modern shaman, the symbols and activators of such magical essences, the hinge on which social knowledge depends for its legitimation, both empowering and skeptical^{cxl}.

One last note must be made in regard to the magic of the political, and that is that this magic seems absolutely *normal*^{cxli}. Even while hundreds of thousands of citizens are pour into the streets, gather in stadiums and tune in to television, radio and internet broadcasts and money pours in and out of coffers by the tens and hundreds of millions, this all, while being remarkable, appears as little more than an amplification of a process that has been repeating itself for over two centuries. This is the magic of magic – it is itself so mundane that it goes unnoticed. While the magic of others seems wild, primitive and eccentric, we are often blind and deaf to our own conjurings and superstitions,

classifying them as *natural* and *ordinary* when they are anything but. The following pages are the result of not only immersing myself in politics, but at the end of it all, stopping and asking myself, ‘did that really just happen?’ The answer was always ‘yes’ and these pages are my attempt to grapple with my own experiences in the magical lands of the political campaign.

Advertising: Magic in Grey Flannel

Outside of politics, but with clear implications for my project, advertising has been pointed at for its magical qualities. As early as 1934, Bronislaw Malinowski pointed towards both advertising and political oratory as having magical qualities when likening Western magic to the magic practiced by Trobrian Islanders^{cxlii}. At the same time, mystical Marxist Walter Benjamin was continuing his program of locating the enchanted within modernity, and tracking the re-enchantment of modern life by the forces of the contemporary, especially commodity fetishism. His colossal opus ‘The Arcades Project’ is a statement, among many others, on [then] modern advertising as well as on Benjamin’s method for the study of the contemporary under capital: wandering [down a one-way street, or through the Parisian Arcades] and observing the great wealth of commodity which is displayed and reflected^{cxliii}. The displays of the arcades now come to us through momentary glimpses on the television, in movie theaters, and on the internet as well as in slow strolls through the pages of magazines and books. For Benjamin, a saunter through the interior of the arcades, and then the interior of the adorned home, was commodity fetishism in practice, where objects of labor are mystified, imbued with connoisseur value or exoticism which masks the human relations of the labor in its

manufacture. These objects of assembly lines and mass manufacture, devoid of the auratic, were injected with special meaning, from sentimentality to exclusivity, in a movement of erasure and replacement.

In more recent times, Raymond Williams, Jackson Lears and James Twitchell have all examined advertising in light of magic. Williams, the earliest of the three theorists, following Marxist tenets of commodity fetishism, points to the loss of use value in advertising. He states that,

...we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meaning which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly available. The short description of the pattern we have is *magic*: a highly organized and professional system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally similar to the magical systems in simpler societies, but rather strangely coexistent with a highly developed scientific technology. (From *During* 2006, p. 422. italics in the original)

Contrary to the ‘strangely coexistent’ aspects of magic in developed society that Williams notes, historian Jackson Lears, in his seminal *Fables of Abundance*, points to advertising’s roots in the tradition of snake oil peddlers and enthusiastic Christianity that characterized the rural US through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Lears’ formidable history and analysis, the magic of advertising, which takes form as the re-enchanted rational, carried over from common con-artist/soul saver practices in rural and burgeoning industrial US^{cxliv}. Both of these ‘sales’ traditions found their hook in the

languages of magical transformation. Their flocks were bolstered by the onslaught of industrial capital and urbanization in the nineteenth century, which drove the rural proletariat into urban centers looking for work and hoping for passage out of their situation by magical means (luck, fortune or grace). Their claims were situated in the discourses of liberalism and the narratives of legends of the gold rush, oil barons and Gatsby. The transformations and mystical practices of Christianity^{cxlv}, from the sacraments to intimate communication with God or other celestial beings, and the promise of Christ-like magical healing of all that ails, were the implicit social knowledge on which both preachers and confidence men fed. The magic promised in cure-all oils and potions became rationalized into the advertising of the twentieth century and were re-endowed with the powers of the modern, sexy, masculine, feminine, aspirational and (rugged, unique) individual. The cure-all of snake oil became the purchase of a new suit that will make your boss promote you, the car that will make your neighbors envy you or the cologne that will make the opposite sex desire you. Goading this was the forgetting of class lines and the Gatsby myth, driving millions to emerging cities and the established metropolis in search of work and a way to pass from rags to riches, magically.

In the most cynical of the three analyses Twitchell not only cites advertising as magical in its promises, as Williams and Lears also do, but also in its premises. The solutions to what ails you are magical because the very affliction was created magically and transferred to the consumer^{cxlvi}. Perhaps you did not know that you lacked sex appeal until you learned that you needed to wear cologne, smoke, or purchase a sleeker, more expensive car. You had no reason to think that your suit or your appliances mattered to your boss when he decides who to promote. With advertising, these afflictions of taste and consumption magically transform social ways, criteria for judgment, anxieties and

desire. He also takes the Christianity/Advertising parallel one step further into what Richard Simon labels “adtopia”, a utopia populated with the desired and attainable stuff of the everyday^{cxlvii}. Instead of a Biblical utopia of goodness beyond the imaginable, advertising creates an equally unattainable utopia in the model of Sisyphus. It is filled with everyday goods that disappear into being undesirable when we grasp at them. Twitchell also draws many parallels between advertising and Christianity, even offering a brief but substantial list of major advertising execs in the early twentieth century who came from strong Christian backgrounds, suggesting a material bond between the two.

While not channeling the magical in any way, Stewart Ewen’s *Captains of Consciousness* states that advertisements are a tool for social order in much the same way that Levi-Strauss sees magic^{cxlviii}. The ads themselves, manipulated by the puppeteers of power, look to control meaningful social action through the creation of social realities and the channeling of aspiration, desire, labor and possibility. In the case of advertising’s modern genesis, which is to say though print and then electronic media, advertisers sought to produce a consuming public, to instill desire and to educate and acculturate the unwashed masses into consumerism and out of protestant frugality and modesty. The unhappiness and anxiety of transience, separation from community, local cultural practices, and wage labor opened up venues in which to replace older modes of satisfaction with new consumer objects and habits^{cxlix}. While this analysis is the rational side of advertising, the ties between Ewen and Twitchell’s magical analysis are strong, especially in light of the creative role that advertising plays in shaping both the inner psychological and outer material life. It is not a long stretch to see the magical creation of new worlds, with their problems and solutions, in advertising^{cl}.

The historians of advertising would here note that the trade has not always been a magical one. On the contrary, advertising in the early twentieth century rebelled against its scheming cousins – peddlers of magical potions and country preachers – and both conceived of itself and practiced a much different trade than the one which we witness today, or indeed the one nearly forty years ago that Raymond Williams critiqued^{cli}. As Lears, Ewen and noted advertising historian Roland Marchand have all noted, advertisers were some of the 1% of the population at the turn of the century who were college educated, and as such saw themselves as rational and their mission as pedagogues of modernity. They lobbied government for truth in advertising laws that sought to curtail the practices of deviant confidence men and to instill public trust in their trade; they strove for the image of upstanding citizens, indeed *model* in every sense of the word, and for their business to be one of reliance, honesty and benevolence. This was exemplified in the unique selling point, or USP, which was the focus of advertising pitches at the turn of the century. The USP told the potential consumer exactly what was different and better about this product as compared to a similar product manufactured by the competition. It outlined the specific features of a product, the benefit from its use and its application in daily life.

The USP was the prevalent mode of pitching a product at the turn of the century, was modified during the economic boom of the booming 1920s, and was completely obliterated by the desperate mode of Depression-era advertising. In a glaring example of what Walter Benjamin saw as re-enchantment, magic was injected into advertising by turning commodity fetishism into mass public culture. Industrialization and the Depression had created holes in the consumer economy, rendering certain products irrelevant and leaving warehouses full of goods that were not being sold as

unemployment skyrocketed and those who had money tightened their belts. Manufacturers needed to find new ways to sell goods to consumers and to find and market new uses for older goods. This was also coupled with the new found knowledge that most household purchases were made by women, who were thought of (by ad men) as being the less rational and more emotional sex^{clii}. This ushered in a new era founded on fear, judgment and aspiration, and cemented commodity fetishism as the goal of advertising^{cliii}. The process that Twitchell outlines as the magical cycle of advertising – the creation of ailments along with the marketing of the solution – took shape during this era, although it is perpetually re-working itself. It is interesting that depression, a part of the cycle of capitalism, was the force that ultimately re-enchanted the rational/pedagogical practice of advertising.

Historian of 1960s ad culture Thomas Frank's study takes the development of advertising one step further by adding the affect/image of cool^{cliv}. While Marchand's study of the Depression era focused on fear and judgment, and Lears takes the idea of abundance as the driving metaphor in the dialectic between consumption and restraint, Frank's study looks at the way the 1960s counter-culture influenced commodity drive and production, and advertising's response to it. Advertisers began to see themselves as artists and sought to identify with the cool and hipness of those who they were pitching to, increasingly a younger demographic. This stood in stark contrast to earlier incarnations of ad men as highly educated and cultured (in the Ed Hirsch sense) Madison Avenue-types in grey flannel suits and matching hats. Ads again turned further away from the USP and into the realm that we now find ubiquitous, that of selling the image of cool, sexy, sheik, and arousing. Cars were marketed less as the bourgeois family dream and more on power (this marks the first printed references to horse power and engine size in auto ads) and

sex appeal. While the marketing demographic moved into younger people, upwardly mobile young adults rather than housewives, advertisers were careful to keep the appetites of those who were leaving this group whetted by marketing endless youth. By the 1960s, advertising's claim on being the rational trade was long forgotten and the practice was fully enchanted, focusing on marketing through affect and the creation of social reality.

If both political oratory and advertising are magical systems, then the inevitable conclusion is that political advertising – through both media and the campaign trail – are also magical in quality. Indeed they are, but in more ways than the selling of a commodity. The magic of political campaigning (advertising included) lies in the complex interrelation between the creation (and naming^{clv}) of national ailment and in its proposed solution, the myths of party and candidate, the illusion of simple solutions to complex and increasingly multi-national problems, the persuasion of oratory and dramatic illusion, the choreographed transformation of a citizen into a candidate, and the willing self-deception of the population and the attendant skepticism drawn out by During^{clvi}.

Campaigning is intensely transformative in its practices as it takes a human object and imbues it with traits, connections, powers and abilities that it did not previously manifest. A campaign seeks to make an image, to create a narrative and myth to spur the imagination of the electorate, stirring their emotions and actions. Along with working to make a candidate's visage, name and catch phrase known, the campaign seeks to impact the public imagination by mapping the condition of success into the body of the candidate, and creating a mystical world where the implementation of their policies ends

in quantifiable and qualitative utopia^{clvii}. The magic of this is the illusion through which policy speeches, which are little more than rhetoric combined with affect, become salient. Most candidates have on-line and print versions of their specific policies, they are long, arduous and generally tedious to engage with. They are true policy, lengthy, complex, contingent and written with legality and pragmatism taken into account. They are poorly represented, if at all, in speeches. Stump speeches seek to cultivate affect, energy and enthusiasm, to create a scene and a sound, not to provide fodder for knowledgeable policy debates. However, these shallow glosses are what form the public imagination of the candidate as future politician and the vision of the future as utopia or dystopia.

What can not be discounted from this formula is the extent to which the populous knowingly deceives itself into messianic searching. Despite material evidence that needs are not being met and concerns addressed, voters cling to messages of change, redemption, victory and greatness. While Edelman^{clviii} squarely puts this in the court of myths holding the creative possibilities of politics static, there is also an element of self-deception, a blind eye being turned for any number of possible reasons. Perhaps the most obvious is that people have a way of trading one myth for another, disbelieving in one system in order to subscribe to another. James Fraser finds this as magic – man possessing control over the natural world – is replaced by religion where an unseen entity has control. This is also found in rationalists like Descartes and Hobbes who decried superstition but were believers Christianity. Likewise, both Daring and Schmidt point to skepticism as one of the key driving forces of magic as well as religion. This disbelief often comes at the expense of another set of beliefs – the rational elite of the early 20th century US bolstered their jovial and serious critiques of magic shows through a belief in science. In the same vein, the belief in a candidate, party or policy is often done at the

expense of the opposition's magical attempts at creating a candidate or shaping an imaginary world.

MYTH

Myth, a favorite topic of folklore and structural anthropology, has much to say about the power of politics in relation to its own narratives and lore. According to Levi-Strauss myth brings order, it organizes social knowledge and practice and sets parameters within which boundaries are fixed^{clix}. For Historian Warren Sussman, myth is always embedded in history, in the form of historiography, which contributes narrative flows and archetypes to the retelling of stories, cloaked in history as fact^{clx}. For political scientist Murray Edelman, myths are part of what binds citizens to political parties, despite their material needs not being met. The emotional connection made with political parties based on specific yet flexible narratives holds citizens in a state of hope and belief. He again refers to archetypical narratives as the redemptive myth to give form to the role that political parties have in our implicit social knowledge^{clxi}. Although one need not even vote to be a citizen or to function socially, there are groups of individuals among whom politics and political being are a necessity for participation. In these circles, the myths of party are strong and are indeed part of implicit social knowledge. In all three of these cases, myths, communally known by definition, play a substantial and powerful role in organizing social life, setting parameters for social action, and in the shaping of truths. These myths are more than stories, they are powerful intensities that have material effects when creatively deployed. Edelman's concept of party myth is particularly enticing although in this particular cycle more than one myth was needed to secure votes.

Along with the myths of political parties, there are the myths of the nation^{clxii}, the individual, historical figures and supporters. Each of these bundles of narrative, power, archetype and affect gave a mooring to supporters as they self-identified with candidates, issues and parties and allowed candidates to become more than just a citizen. Each candidate's story was glued to a common myth or archetype – the rugged individual (or, in contemporary parlance, *The Maverick*), the selfless devotee or monk, the military hero, the self-made man, the dissident, the fearless leader – all of which have resonances with popular myths from legend, literature and film, as well as predecessors whose portraits hang in the halls of power^{clxiii}. The deployment of myths also serves to erase parts of the candidate's past that don't fit into the narrative, silencing possibly controversial or inconsistent parts. In turn, candidates also re-animate past beings, filling them with new, but transformed life which integrates into the current situation^{clxiv}. The reanimation of the past, as Benjamin has pointed out in a less than optimistic fashion, is one of the most powerful story-telling devices available to politicians.

Myths of the supporter give those who subscribe to the lore of party or candidate the feeling of belonging, of being within their own narrative – conservative, patriot, progressive, independent. Their political actions in relation to the party, cause or candidate, endows them with their own narrative which silences incoherence and contradiction. It also affords them community, a sense of purpose, and the potential for victory, to have a discernable impact on the future, on their own and the common good. In short, it gives them a change to part take in what is perhaps the largest magic trick performed, a democratic election, where tens of millions band together to alter the course of the [natural] world. These myths are spread in many forms, most of which are rapidly accelerated by the instantaneous nature of communication.

Myth and its attendant magical practices can also act as a cure for the anxieties of disorder. In Levi-Strauss' 'The Sorcerer and His Magic' he reduces the sort of illness that is cured by these sorcerers or shaman as that of psychosis, a mental disorder which is basically cured by psychotherapy. Indeed magic does take hold at times of great transition and as Erich Fromm tells us, substantial shifts in political economy are times of great social anxiety as old networks and social orders disintegrate and new ones are not yet formed. In the age of speed and compression^{clxv}, the anxiety is nearly constant, as networks are fleeting, people are transient and professional life is defined by the constant shifting of jobs and locales. In the face of this anxiety, magic has taken hold in many forms. The myths of politics both create comfort in a system that has remained discursively fundamentally unchanged since the dawn of this nation and exists as eminently flexible depending on the necessities and whims of those in power. On the opposite side of the same coin, this system creates anxiety and disease which is righted by social myth, embodied and practiced by its sorcerers. In either case, as the cure or the ill, myth serves as an essential part of the political machine and the magic spells it weaves on the public.

Illustrated icons of Barack Obama as superman started popping up within the final six months of the election. The icons ranged from Obama posing with fists on his hips, chest pushed out and sporting the signature Superman outfit with an 'O' in the middle, to him opening up a white shirt and tie to expose the modified Superman outfit, to him dramatically flying out of a phone booth in fully regalia. All three versions were branded with the signature Obama 'O', which became ubiquitous within public visual culture.

In legend, Superman was not human (supernatural?), born on the planet of Krypton and hurled to earth. Among his super-human qualities were his bullet proof chest, x-ray vision, land speed faster than a speeding bullet and super strength. His only weakness was kryptonite, and his nemesis was the mad scientist, and bald white guy, Lex Luther. Throughout Superman's incarnations as Cold-War hero, movie phenomena and even in death, Superman heralded a heroic narrative of redemption, search for home and the overcoming of the myriad forces of evil, including those within. Memorable moments in Superman's fictitious life include him deflecting machine gun bullets with his chest,

physically supporting the world – in the fashion of a more stylized Atlas – seeing through walls, and his signature flight high above the world, cape flapping in the wind. While these in no way to sum up the multiple lives of Superman into one narrative, his being is always heroic, as Superman or even his awkward all-too-human alter ego, Clark Kent.

Barack Obama fills this role as an allegory, breathing new life into the old and worn-out threads and re-animating both the role of the super hero and re-defining that of the executive office. His racial, political and social beings are recoded in the narrative of Superman, but this one attends Harvard, takes on Republicans and deflects Richard Nixon-style slander, and his fortress of solitude is the iPod armed with sweet soul music and hip-hop. He is a modern day super hero, overcoming insurmountable odds against front-runner Hillary Clinton, battling the forces of bald white men the country over, and moving about the country at the incredible speed. Despite his opponents' best efforts, he did prove to be bullet proof by maintaining discipline and cool even in the face of egregious lies and slander. In a time of desert war, not cold war, and the demons of over consumption and fiscal irresponsibility within, the electorate was searching for deliverance from Super hero, and indeed created one. This one erased the nationalism of Superman and replaced it with the cosmopolitanism of Obama, breathing new life into an old narrative, trans- and de-forming it for its own uses, for a new time in the Nation's life.



That particular Republican debate was nearly a Ronald Reagan love fest. The four major players – Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani, Mike Huckabee and John McCain – all attempted to play up both their admiration for and emulation of the former President, Cold-War hero and conservative icon. They stressed his triumph over the Soviet Union in that long and costly conflict fought all over the world, his drastic tax cuts, his free-market values that heralded massive economic growth and prosperity, his defense of the US through military might, and the redemption of the US after Vietnam and the weakness of the Carter years. They sought to re-animate the narrative of Reagan and to replace it with their own image, a modern Reagan, and to claim the Messianic narrative as their own: they would be the ones to save the Nation, its economy, its morals, its very capitalist soul.

The chroniclers of Reagan, both friend and foe, can easily see this as a rose-colored mockery of history at worst, and a two-dimensional and un-nuanced summary at best. But it still stands, even if the complex impacts of what happened in the oval office from 1981-1989 are less than three decades away. Can you imagine the lost depth as the years move further away, and the generations of myth that are produced? The dead are not safe^{clxvi}. Indeed the magic of myth is predatory, even cannibalistic, and dare I say necrophilic, in its bricolage. Unlike the myths of the past, which held natural elements and great people to be sacred, modern political myth makes use all that is in its past, the rubble of progress and warfare, in its attempts to gain power.

But recently, the 'dead' have fought back. The McCain campaign was sued several times over the use of recorded music on the campaign train, most notably by Nancy Wilson, but also by Jackson Browne. The campaign's use of Wilson's 'Barracuda' and Browne's 'Running on Empty' offended both artists who did not wish to have an association with McCain or Palin (who used Barracuda). Contrary to the Reagan campaign's use of 'Born in the USA' to which Bruce Springsteen responded that they had

misunderstood the song completely, these artists sought to sever the public ties rather than to be resigned to being misinterpreted. Or perhaps McCain simply did not possess the magical force that Reagan did, which makes even his corpse a powerful icon.

The Prestige

In ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, Walter Benjamin writes: “In other words, our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up in the image of redemption^{clxvii}.” That image of final and lasting redemption, presented to us in a glorious flash, is the prestige, the climax of the magician’s illusion. The image of redemption, of paradise regained, is a myth formulated by dystopia on one hand and brief glimpses of happiness on the other. Our current unhappiness is encased in the idyllic percepts of the past and imaginings of a future where both the ease and affect of that past also contain the goods and life ways of the present, measured by the generalizing of our fleeting moments of happiness in the present (recall adtopia and forget utopias of classless society). In our contemporary age, where happiness can be measured and quantified through instruments, it is sometimes done so with polls, votes and the images of a larger slice of the pie, of membership in the majority, of a piece of what those who we imagine to be happy possess. Our image of redemption has been reduced to competition and appropriation, with our redemption coming at the cost of another’s loss. It appears in a flash, sometimes in the feeling of inevitable victory as the participants of a rally spring to their feet with joy in their hearts and tears in their eyes. This is the magician’s prestige, the denouement of the illusion, the moments when awe and suspension of disbelief are indiscernible. This moment, easily canned for endless reproduction, is one of the chief magic tricks of the political campaign.

For both the faithful and the skeptical the prestige is a moment of redemption. For skeptics who cling to old hierarchies, practices and power pyramids, the roar of the crowd

is proof positive of their moral and intellectual superiority. The ability to separate the pleasures of base entertainment, with the aid of transcendental judgment of the participants, is a fixture carried over through time^{clxviii}. Those who watch in detached amusement see the fruits of their intellectual labor flower as the masses clinging to superstition, awed by trickery and deception. As they watch the throngs gather and cheer for their candidate, skeptics see packs of animals, threatening and misguided, even dangerous. They hold themselves as superior for knowing the truth of it all and in this act there is the image of redemption: the very idea of an exclusive heaven guarded by St. Peter as the bourgeois fantasy of privacy and judgment, truly looking *down* on the unfit. This image is a necessity in confirming the hierarchies that ruling parties adhere to. As I have stated above (following Schmidt and During), this skepticism is an essential part of belief.

For the faithful, the prestige is proof positive of their belief system, the moment when their superstitions are confirmed as truth and that the order to which they insert themselves is validated. In all of their hopes and dreams for a future full of what makes them happy. As they witness political greatness and hear platforms they believe in and visions on the future they subscribe to, their faith is strengthened and when the final applause erupts they are filled with the spirit, and they briefly see the world as it could be. Superstition is always met with skepticism, and the moment when God speaks, miracles happen and the impossible is rendered into flesh quell the voices of dissent, however briefly. The voices of dissent do come back, and are a necessity in the reaffirmation of faith and belief.

Within the realm of the prestige, there is a third category, beyond the binary of believer and skeptic, but present in both: it is the self-deluded. Following During's earlier

conviction that in the midst of modernity is a constant struggle between rationality and magic, observers of the prestige may be free to put aside their skepticism for a moment and slide across the aisle to become believers. In the mode of self-delusion, there are those who choose to believe in the magic, even though they know well what it is. There is a certain familiar pragmatism in this, repeated when times seem desperate. Some believed the magic of Obama, despite their initial misgivings, simply because they had so much disdain for McCain or the Republican brand in general. Likewise there were those who lambasted McCain during the primary and became supporters when confronted with Obama or Clinton. It is not that they were suddenly persuaded, but rather outside factors forced them to believe because the alternative was bleak, or because for one reason or another it became expedient to be a believer.

I remember first opening up the link to 'Yes We Can', the hippest political jingle since Frank Sinatra anonymously lent his voice to John F. Kennedy's campaign by recording High Hopes. Far from being anonymous, this jingle starred former Black-Eyed Peas vocalist Will.i.am and neo-soul favorite John Legend singing a text from a beautifully crafted speech by Barack Obama, along with a host of celebrities, including legendary musician Herbie Hancock, hall of fame athlete Kareem Abdul-Jabar and boxer and daughter of the boxing legend, Laila Ali. The video moved MTV-style with short cuts between images, leaving me guessing at the some of the faces that I recognized but could not place. The music is quite simple, a percussive acoustic guitar playing a G-Badd4-C-Dadd2. The ringing of the open strings, adds shimmer to the rhythmic drive of the lower strings. This guitar is only augmented by the progressive layering of voices, sung and spoken, until the end when what sounds like John Legend's neo-soul tinkering on an electric piano mix with the guitar as the voices fade out.

*In his cool but persuasive oratorical fashion, channeling the ethos of the preacher and the presence of the statesman, Obama repeated the words 'Yes We Can' as a punctuation between his ideas and vignettes. This was picked up and passed around though the voices of a number of the singers/speakers. It was one of the catch phrases that was literally translated into the languages of millions, creating a wave of affect. That affect moved to two already staked out resting places: hope and change. In the video, the noise of the crowd appears in two separate forms. The first is the repeatedly chanting **'We Want Change'** heard after the phrase **nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change**. The second is the wild cheering dialed in after **But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope**, and the crowd goes wild. The chain-link of this affect and slogan is remarkable.*

The feined sponteneity of these sound effects is both illusion and fact. They are illusions created in the studio, but are modeled on live performances when large audiences did chant for change and cheer for hope. The prestige is the illusion of the masses spoken into life in the ‘millions of voices calling for change’ is nothing short of magical. The enthusiasm embodied in this collective outpouring brought another million voices into existence until there were 62 million on November 4th. Even the rational doubter, who knows the technological effect of dialling in crowd noise and studio editing, might concede that indeed there were millions who were enthralled by Obama, that they yearned for change and had hope for the future. Even if you doubted, you might be willing to suspend your cynicism about the system and be a supporter, or at least be moved by it all, convinced by the grand illusion that vicory is inevitable and that there would indeed be a utopia waiting on the other side of election day.

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Hero is a narrative, it already has a definite end, or perhaps a few possible ends, and a few variations in the beginning and middle, but by and large, its paths are known and well-worn. In US lore there are enough available heroic narratives that most viable candidates attempt to fit into one or another. There are working-class heroes in the mold of John Henry and Tom Joad, Gatsby millionaires, military victors and captives, pulled themselves up-by-their bootstrings, and prodigal sons. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot reminds us, what separates various forms of narrative and history is that history appeals to truth, other narratives do not^{clxix}. The successful presentation of a life narrative is essential in both appeal and attaining the intangibles of the campaign – trust, enthusiasm, and belief.

*Republican contender Mitt Romney released a commercial which was tagged ‘hero’. In the add a man named Robert Gay narrates a very personal story: his young daughter went missing in New York City for three days. His business partner shut down the company temporarily and brought his employees to the city to help with the search effort, which ended in a successful return of Gay’s daughter. At the end of the commercial Gay says: **Mitt’s done a lot of things that people say are nearly impossible, but for me, the most important thing he’s ever done is to help save my daughter.** All this narrated over music and a montage that could have been ripped straight out of a TRU-TV crime documentary with its ominous music, pictures of the young girl happily smiling, scrolling newspaper headlines and profile action shots of Mitt Romney in an official-looking setting. The music starts our with minor piano chords and dark synthesized string sounds, mirroring the stock footage of dark city streets as gay tells of his daughter going missing. The piano then switches to more neutral sounding chords as he tells of the business being shut down and relocating to New York, finally ending of tonal major chords when Romney’s smiling face appears. Watching this ad again, over a year after it first ran, it looks like Romeny chose the form of the heroic narrative from the archetype of the true crime documentary, which ends in triumph, justic being served and the hero readying for another inevitable heinous crime to solve.*

John McCain had the distinct advantage of having worn the metal of the hero for decades. A&E biography had already made a documentary on his service and his time in Vietnamese prison with all of the professional, slick visual and sonic trappings that only high-budget television studios can. Parts of that documentary were placed on McCain’s web page as promotional material. They showed his prestigious family lineage of military

royalty and appealed to a sense of the past – moving through black and white photographs and grainy footage. His heroic narrative also traveled through his blood, his history and continued into his present position as a maverick politician. He had expectation, heights of achievement, a downfall, suffering and the notorious video he was forced to make denouncing the nation that he loved, and redemption, renewed patriotic vigor and a return to public service.

Where McCain exceeds Romney is in the scale of the illusion: Romney is one man's hero, and perhaps also his daughter's; McCain is an American hero. Romney's heroics are part of his overall imageric repertoire – he was a fiscal genius, a Republican governor in a Democratic state, a man of personal faith and family, conservative to the core...and also a hero. McCain was a hero first, a narrative which colored everything else that he did, the referent to his decisions, the substance of his very subject. McCain's illusion was complete, his prestige so powerful that it was all encompassing, erasing anything that did not fit into its clean lines and dramatic folds.

The Imagination

In modern political campaigns, the imagination looms large in the aims and goals of every piece of advertising, speech and appearance. When the questions are asked, what will this turn of phrase sound like; or what does this image say?, they are inquiring about the imagination of the electorate. There is a concrete manifestation for each candidate, each speech and ad, but it is the shape that these take in the public imagination that matter. Will this image be trusted, feared, respected or despised? This is the role of the electorate's imagination. Likewise, campaigns imagine the public each and every time they make decisions based on demographics, location and occupation. Each state-specific ad speaks volumes to the campaign's mental image of those who populate the place. These two versions of the imagination are in constant interplay as campaigns seek to find the key to gaining the vote.

Enlightenment theorists of government took a skeptical view of the role of the imagination in public life, much different from more modern conceptions of it in the age of globalization. As opposed as they may seem and being separated by centuries and major political changes, both versions are deeply in play within the vicissitudes of the modern political campaign. The imagination, broadly stated in both views, summons up

objects that are not immediately present and has what Frazier, through both Twitchell and Taussig, calls imitative and contagious magic^{clxx}. Because objects that hold power are not always readily available, they are imitated only after being first imagined. Speculations like ‘what would Reagan have done?’ or ‘what issues are relevant for Indianans?’ necessitate the imagination, no matter how much research is done. By imitating the imagined object – think Hillary Clinton slugging whiskey in an Ohio bar or Barack Obama touring automotive plants in Michigan – candidates seek to exert power over these entities. Likewise, as citizens come into contact with candidates, however brief these encounters are, the two bodies continue to affect each other. Potential voters talk to others about their experiences, doing the candidates’ work for them, filling in gaps with their own imaginations of the candidate, but based perhaps on scant evidence or just a feeling. Likewise, the stories and concerns that are told to candidates by citizens are often repeated and used as fodder for speeches and bullet points, aiding in the magic of gathering the faithful.

Hobbes, the most virulent opponent of the imagination viewed the it as irrational, in league with superstitions that attributed agency to non-physical beings. Agency was the domain of rational creatures, of which man (in both meanings of the word) was the only possessor. Rationality and reason were products of pedagogy, part of which was dispelling the superstition which animated the inanimate. To create a rational state, which is what Hobbes envisioned after years of warfare in England, the imagination had to be brought under wraps, forced out through rigorous discipline and education. Spinoza began his philosophy along the same lines as Hobbes, but eventually made a key concession in his political theory. He believed that the imagination, while not being as malevolent as Hobbes made it seem, was inevitable. Rational men had active

imaginations but were able to keep them in check and did not entertain them, let alone have them affect daily life and deliberation. Making the tacit assumption that it is rational men who run governments, Spinoza moved away from Hobbes' belief in the extermination of the imagination in favor of a careful study in the pedagogy of the imagination. Those in power could learn the ways of the imagination in order that they could instill ideas and direct the less rational towards the creation of a more perfect state, and order^{clxxi}.

Fast-forward 300 years and we find a radically different interpretation of the social role of the imagination. Theorist Arjun Appadurai sees the imagination as the thing that opens up the condition of possibility and alters both expectation of the future and the lived experience of the present^{clxxii}. The images (and I would argue the *sounds*) of other places deeply inform those who are removed through distance and economic circumstances via the consumption of mass media. Because of the similarities of the mass objects consumed, Appadurai grants the imagination the status of being communal property, a common articulation of sound, image, language and affect which is shared among many, similar to Benedict Anderson's print culture without the exclusionary traits^{clxxiii}. The implications for Appadurai involve diasporic populations, but the implications for modern politics are obvious. He also looks at the narratives which can be injected into the imagination, especially as communities are exposed to alternate modernities, new commodities and the possibility of a life drastically different from their own that is being lived by their compatriots. Both of these theories (I include Hobbes and Spinoza together because although they differ in approach, they are both skeptical of the imagination) are involved in the magic of the political, in the creation of illusion, the anticipation of the prestige and the endgame of spin.

While the creation of illusions and myths is a magical process, the political imagination is what sets these events into motion, what creates the conditions, possibilities and forms for their creation. As Twitchell points to both the creation and solution of problems by means of magic in the realm of the commodity, the same can be said for the political, and the meta-illusions that are part of the political advertising process. The political imagination – both the way in which demographics are conceived of by those who sculpt campaigns, and the ways in which the public imagines its needs, possible candidates, and their relationship to their fellow citizens and to the state – is a trick that both creates publics and allows them to knowingly transform themselves through the narratives provided for them^{clxxiv}.

The fact that we only have two major parties is a testament to the political imagination that has been sculpted by a society built on binaries: cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians, city and country. We govern by the majority, not by nuance or debate, but rather by strength, with a clear sense of victor and vanquished. Over the two years of following the campaigns, engaging with political junkies and casual observers, getting into lively discussions with friends, neighbors and co-workers, and sometimes complete strangers, there was a feeling that I didn't recall from previous elections. There was a broad mistrust of both parties: the Republican party had lost its brand – namely fiscal conservatism and small government; the Democratic leadership had not aggressively forced an end to the Iraq war, had not resisted questionable supreme court nominations, and had not aggressively pursued investigations of corruption and fiscal mismanagement. People were frustrated with both parties, and more than ever it seemed that the vast complexities of local, national and international government and its effects on individual citizens and their communities could not longer be encompassed by just two parties. Democrats were checking out Libertarian/Republican Ron Paul for his anti-war and anti-Federal Reserve stances. High-profile New England Republicans like Lincoln Chaffee and Jim Jeffords abandoned the party saying that it no longer fit them. Long-standing Democratic Senator and former vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman entered the senate as an independent after losing his state's Democratic Primary. If there was a moment when a third, fourth or fifth party was viable, this was the moment.

But it did not happen. Our political imagination is so deeply affected by the binary of the majority and the fear of being in the powerless minority that the possibility of another party gaining more than a handful of seats exists nowhere. Our imagination is bound to two parties as if by force of spell or deep hypnosis, as if they are our only possibilities.

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We have a term called electability – it means the potential for being elected and governs much of the discourse on candidates early on in the campaign season. Conservative New York Times Columnist David Brooks remarked in an interview that we really need to critically evaluate our definition of electability. He was speaking of course of the Democratic fold with Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama as the frontrunners. Compared to some of the others – Joe Biden, Bill Richardson, Chris Dodd, Dennis Kucinich and Mike Gravel, these two are political babies. With a combined decade in National political office the leaders of the pack were, in some readings, nothing more than superstars with vast name recognition, not political heavyweights with resumes on which to hang the hopes of the nation. This was not a competition between resumes, a deliberation of strengths or a substantive comparison of policy differences, this was a contest of the imagination: whose face fit best in the White House, who we could imagine at the desk in the oval office, in who did we see the embodiment of our own hopes and dreams of victory^{clxxv}.

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A highlight reel was posted in December of 2007 entitled “One Voice,” which was composed of sound clips from two different speeches set to a montage of the growing ‘Obama movement’ as it was labeled. The first speech was Obama’s address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention, the speech which began his national career. He gave his now legendary pitch about no blue or red states, but the United States, which was a staple of his rhetoric. The second speech was where the title of the clip comes from, where he begins with ‘one voice can change a room’ and builds it into changing the world. All the while there are video clips, with tagged locations of huge rallies, supporters from all walks of life and Obama’s persuasive presence. All this is accompanied by marching muzak which begins with a snare, an ominous cello pedal and modal strings. When he gets to his ‘United States of America’ line, French horns are added, softening the sound and giving it a profound sense of distance as an arial stop-time clip of a public square in New York is seen filling up with people. As the rhetoric becomes more fevered in the spirit of unity, the snare fades out and a tonal melody from the horns and strings dominates. The music fades out at the end of the section when Obama asks if we participate in the politics of cynicism or hope. The suspenseful cello and snare then reappear as the second section from ‘one voice’ begins, melting into horns again as Obama states “your voice can change the world.”

Indeed it is a powerful image for the imagination, me, one person, one vote, one voice, but with echoes that ripple throughout the world. In a masterful channeling of the imagination, one voice can change the world, but it is not the voters who will ultimately perform that change, it is the candidate, leading their imagination to the polls.

Mysticism

In times past, there was a prescribed role within society for those who could tell the future. This practice, referred to as divining, soothsaying or fortune telling, was the

role of oracles, shaman, the priestly cast or various subaltern groups and outcasts of society^{clxxvi}. In England, for instance, it was the role of the Roma or gypsies, an unwanted and feared group, to provide these services to believers^{clxxvii}. These practitioners depended on a direct connection to truths that were otherwise obscured to others. Through innate gifts (as with Roma in England, African or Indigenous blood in South America^{clxxviii}) or spiritual practices, these truths become known to them. The growth of modern science has since replaced these predictors of the future with institutionally labeled ‘experts’ whose scientific knowledge and methods give them insight into causal relations between man and nature and between man-made institutions. Scientists, economists, historians and area experts are now called in to provide predictions of and prescriptions for the future. Expertise has now replaced hereditary or esoteric knowledge in the act of predicting the future.

As the industrial age became a global phenomenon and the economies of industrialized nations and the developing (or colonized) world became deeply intertwined, new disciplines came to augment or replace the sciences at the helm of society. These were law and economics, intertwined at both the state and global levels^{clxxix}. International organizations have necessitated the growth of international treaties and trade agreements, further entrenching law and economics as governing powers, predictors and prescriptors of the future. Increasingly, their commentary on public policy as well as science included envisioning the future through veiled communication with knowledge and power. One need only witness the vigorous fight for climate change reforms and environmental protection to see the conflicts between economics and law on one hand and science on the other.

Liberal democracy has incorporated the magical elements of prediction into its practices via public discussion, persuasive campaigning, policy-pitching, and discussion within the political sphere^{clxxx}. The public testimony of policy experts, often filtered through clearing-house commentaries in vernacular news publications and broadcasts, has become the fodder for our own political imaginations. We use these as points of reference to predict the future if legislation passes, if one candidate triumphs, or if one line of policy is put into place^{clxxxi}. Through these experts we are proxy to mystical knowledge, enchanted and preached to us in opaque and persuasive oratory. We continue to seek out oracles who come to us through print, broadcast and, in their most spun articulation, through our friends and neighbors who have already heard the words of the future^{clxxxii}. Furthermore, our very democratic action – our vote – is often couched in terms that move it away from rationality and into mystical territory. We are voting for the future, and one that we ourselves are able to predict: glory if our candidate wins, disaster if they don't.

Preaching the inevitable consequences of policy has become a staple of the political campaign. Beyond personal prognosis, like George H. W. Bush's (in)famous dictum 'read my lips, no new taxes,' candidates also predict the inevitable consequences of their legislative program. Economic growth is given in terms of enticing and definite numbers and the attendant effects on the economy – trade and budget deficits, increases in revenue, distribution to Federal programs – are stated with certainty that is uncanny. Those who campaign on platforms of change – which seemed to be almost everyone in 2008 – go so far as to predict broad changes in the political culture of the beltway and the US in general. They forecast drastic action like fewer earmarks, reining in lobbying, no unwarranted spending, open government, personal and fiscal responsibility. While these

claims seem trite and commonplace, we should not overlook the fundamentally mystical quality of these discourses, even as they seem tired and useless.

This image is peddled in many ways – a green future, small-town family values to combat the decadences of modern life, financial well being, financial excess, national security, and military supremacy. These utopias are extraordinarily complex creations, drawing from multiple sites within the public imagination and combining them into new montages of the future, imbued with the power of the past and the truth of history. However, they are injected into the political imagination as the most simple of entities, facts, pictures and stories. Numbers, the cannon of modernity, are most often the weapon of this mysticism^{clxxxiii}, but as images move about with increasing speed, campaigns can draw on the most common of images to construct their utopias.

In addition to the images of the future, the sounds of the future are peddled with increased efficiency, thanks to the advancing capabilities of the internet. The sounds of green jobs, of working families getting a tax break, of young adults able to afford an education and ascend into prosperous adulthood are part of the modern campaign^{clxxxiv}. Testimonials by ordinary citizens who also see the future as the campaign does litter television ads and promotional footage. We can hear their inevitable triumph set to heroic music as they testify to their broken past and their hope in the new day that *is* ahead. They, like us, have been endowed with the power to see into the future, to know the outcome and to let it determine their actions. No longer do we judge a candidate by the strength of their character, but by the benefits that will be reaped by the population, of the US and the world. No longer is this a matter of having a dream or a vision, it is a matter of mystical certainty, a communion with ultimate truth and inevitable outcome.

While this indeed is persuasive oratory that we have grown accustomed to hearing from both politicians and pundits, it is deeply linked to a magical past of vision into the future and a history of magical transformation that comes from both religious oratory as well as confidence men peddling magical potions. Politicians, like both confidence men and preachers, ask for your trust in them as well as your investment, a down payment on a future in paradise, the image of redemption flashing up again. They make predictions about your own lives in the form of prosperity (a common hook in religion, politics and magic potions), prestige (national security and international dominance and aid) and opportunity (the ultimate capitalist hook). The future is theirs to see, but the electorate and public media also play a role in accepting and rejecting these visions. Ultimately its our own small piece of mysticism that drives us to cast our vote with a vision of the future in mind.

On the night of May 20th 2008, Barack Obama addressed a large crowd in Des Moines Iowa, the state whose caucus put him on top as a true contender five months previous. Since then the snow had melted, the crowds had grown and on that night, the night on the Kentucky and Oregon primaries, the majority of delegates available through the Democratic Party had been unofficially granted to him. While consciously steering away from proclaiming victory, Obama urged the crowd to think of the next step and the fight ahead.

We will face our share of difficult and uncertain days in the journey ahead. The other side knows that they have embraced yesterday's policies so they will also embrace yesterday's tactics to try and change the subject. They'll play on our fears and our doubts. They'll try to sew discord and division to distract us from what matters to you and your future.

Well they can take the low road if they want, but it will not lead us to a better place. It will not work in this election. It won't work because you won't let it work, not this time, not this year [the crowd cheers vigorously].

*In February of 2007, with the race for the presidency newly underway, John McCain recorded a rather humble message of his qualifications for seeking the presidency. **I think that my life, and my experience and my knowledge, everything that I've been able to learn in my life qualifies me to at least seek the presidency of the United States. Do I know everything? No. Do I have every answer, obviously not. But I do think that I understand America's history and America's future. That is to maintain***

the greatness of this nation, both domestically and foreign policy wise. I believe we face the enormous challenges of the 21st century...I believe that I am qualified and with a lot of help I can succeed in guiding the United States of America through very difficult times.

The text was delivered in front of a plain white screen, accompanied by very quiet music – an electronic reed instrument playing a simple tonal melody over a quiet marching snare and occasional cymbal crashes. It invokes the simplicity of Quaker rationalism and New England plain speech – a white background, McCain in a white shirt and red tie with no blazer, speaking candidly and humbly about his qualifications, what he thinks and believes about himself. The music echoed what the text said, it was plain, bland, reminiscent of candor and restraint, without highlight, solo or panache. It was practical, it did not over shadow the voice of the candidate, but rather added another layer, a familiar, comfortable and non-confrontational aura, one that might give good associations to those watching and listening.

*Twenty months later, he recorded a message of a different sort. Set in a sun-bathed living room with large windows and the leaves of green indoor plants in the background, the end of a couch and coffee table visible beside his left shoulder, McCain delivers his message in a regal blue blazer and gold tie set off by a white shirt. He states that the past eight years have not gone well, thanks to Washington's ill-advised refusal of common-sense solutions. He cites savings, job and financial security that are under siege, confidently stating that he will make improve them. **We need a new direction and I have a plan** [a stylized 'McCain Plan' fades in at the top left of the screen]. **Your savings, we'll rebuild them** [Rebuild Savings fades in]. **Your investments, they'll grow again** [Grow Your Investments fades in]. **Energy: we'll drill here and we'll create a renewable energy economy** [Energy Independence fades in]. **Lower taxes will protect your job and create new ones, that'll restore our country. Stand up with me, let's fight for America.***

Forsaking his earlier humility and straight talk, McCain grasped on to mystical knowledge to see how his policies, which are never directly mentioned, will affect the future. This trajectory reads like a microcosm of advertising's own descent from straight-talking Protestant rationalism into jargon, mysticism, magic and illusion.

Modern-Day Shaman in Suits

In an essay that ruminates over the concepts and ideas of relativist philosopher Nelson Goodman and her own experiences with the Piaroa tribe in the Amazon, anthropologist Joanna Overing poses a theory of the role of shaman in their own societies. She deals specifically with *ruwang*, Piaroa spiritual and political leaders, mystic shaman whose nocturnal chanting and ingestion of hallucinogenic plants enables them to walk into another time-space to protect their tribes from the will of evil spirits and to gather sacred information about healing methods. Their power also extends into out-of-

body experiences, where the shaman enter into the body of the afflicted and do battle with the spirits that cause illness inside of the ailing body^{clxxxv}. This Piaroa role mirrors Frazer's assertion that through magical practices, men are placed on par with gods and spirits in their ability to shape the natural world and exert force, in this case, doing battle with malevolent spirits.

In seeking to understand what seemed like the material disconnects between the telling of Piaroa cosmology and shamanistic practices, Overing found Nelson Goodman's work instructive. Goodman's critique of scientific rationalism and empirical claim on 'reality' brought multiple possibilities into focus. His work questions the absolute authority of science and scientific language and brings art into the conversation about the many languages and experiences that create the worlds in which we live^{clxxxvi}. He takes an approach that is reminiscent to that of Levi-Strauss, insisting that those who are world-creators craft new worlds by taking existing pieces of present and past and combining and modifying them in new ways. These new myths and models actively organize the experiences of those who depend on them for guidance and clarification. Through forms of art – including verbal art – new worlds are synthesized within which the present, and therefore the possible futures, function^{clxxxvii}. These creations can exist in many forms: official documents, speculative theories, expert opinion and flamboyant stories. Through their authority and charisma, these products become the work bench on which both problems are disassembled and the raw and recycled material of which solutions are built.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig has also published a great deal on the Shaman of South American, specifically Columbia, where racial politics and the state have deeply impacted both the practice and the conception of and persona of such practitioners. In Columbia not only are there indigenous, mestizo and afro-Columbian practitioners of

magic, there are also male and female practitioners. Each plays a similar role in the curing of the ill and the disarming of spells, but with key differences that have been ascribed into their being through the mythologies of history, the state and the land^{clxxxviii}. Different sorts of magic are attributed to each class of sorcerers, most notably those of African descent who are said to have gained their formidable and inescapable magic from *books*. This is perhaps a reference to Christianity and the image of selling ones soul to the devil in exchange for incredible power, a narrative that exists in different forms in much of the Americas^{clxxxix}. The femaleness of the state is embodied in the Queen of the Mountain of the Diamond Queen, rooted in the soil, local and formidable. Sorcerers from the highlands and lowlands must meet up to exchange for *yage*, a natural hallucinogen necessary for divining, but these exchanges are perpetually colored by assumptions of the others' intent, temperament, power and danger. The organization of the racial state and the social landscape, and the influx of commodities from abroad have changed the face of Colombian magic while not transforming its underlying drives, jealousy and envy. While these still exist, targets of envy and jealousy have changed as the economic systems of national and global capital have transformed objects of expectation and desire.

In our current state, both of these factors are in play. Techniques of world-making and the harnessing of the magics of the state, race, gender and location are deployed in campaigns. These political offensives (indeed politicians who are the face of these campaigns) are the makers of worlds, forming and guiding debates, planting concerns and doubts, dipping into the past and the present to build the maps of the future. They are impacted by the mythologies of the state, the narratives of the players and institutions, and broad assumptions about the races, genders and localities involved in the electoral

competition. The campaigns' ability to determine the worlds in which we live, to play both an expanding and limiting role, is one of the magics of the state.

In a nation that prides itself on the breadth of individuality, freedom of choice, press and information, it is a glaring contradiction for our representation to fall the way it does, that the ruling class, a generalized minority, still remains in power despite a history of failure and false promise^{cxv}. But this is not new, in times past, the magical castes have at times also been the ruling classes, as Frazer states. It comes as no surprise then that politicians, one of the sectors of the US' ruling class, is in possession of magic, and the capacity to deploy and re-shape the ground on which we stand through re-forming our worlds.

In effect, political campaigns and their attendant politicians are our modern day shaman in expensive suits, privy to mystical communion and esoteric knowledge, able to claim patronage from and lineage with other deified and mystified men, and are the shapers of our worlds^{cxvi}. Through sound and image, persuasion and charisma, they form the worlds and create the discourses through which we address ourselves and our relationships to other citizens, the nation and the global. The fact that so much of the act of governing depends on the verity of campaign promises and the maintenance of the image projected during the campaign speaks to the incredible power of the campaign in shaping our political worlds^{cxvii}. The many myths of modernity (state, nation, race, gender, location) both bolster these politicians into legend and imbue them with the powers and faults of the state's mythologies.

In an ad that aired just weeks before the beginning of early voting, the Obama campaign projected the future. It began with a black screen with the words On November 4, 2008... boldly printed in black. The 90-second ad flashed between action shots of Obama on the stump, candid footage of volunteers and supporters and phrases printed on a black screen.

***Everywhere we go we've seen these enormous crowds... [Obama speaking to a crowd]
It's not just the numbers that are so inspiring, it's the people behind those numbers***
[volunteers in an office looking at sheets of paper with determined faces; on the walls, homemade Obama signs and news paper articles are tacked up]

On a black screen: We have an opportunity

They're young and they're old, they're Democrats and independents and yes, more than a few Republicans.

to bring change to our country

Many are showing up to the very first political event in their lifetime [shots of people smiling at Obama events, the camera flashes to a small boy grinning and enthusiastically waving an US flag]

and rebuild our future.

These crowds tell me that when it comes to what's wrong with this country, the American people are not the problem, the American people are the answer. [footage of door-to-door campaigning, block walking and engaging people face-to-face; shots of diverse groups of people holding up Obama signs]

On November 4th, 2008...

If you believe it's time to restore a sense of mission to our politics and a sense of possibility to America [footage of voter registration and people hand-painting large Obama signs; a definite change in sound occurs here, Obama's voice is captured live, clapping is heard and a reverberation gives depth to the sound]

We can restore America's promise

If you want a country that no longer sees itself as a collection of red states and blue states [footage of grassroots campaigning, voter registration, block walking, sign making, phone banking]

We can renew this nation's hope

If you want a president that can lead a United States of America [applause is heard, more footage of grassroots campaigning]

We can change the world

I ask you to believe in this campaign, I ask you to believe in yourselves, I ask you to believe again in the dream that we call America [footage of Obama speaking to an audience outdoors; the sign on the podium in front of him reads 'Restoring Trust In Government']

On November 4th, 2008

We can make history.

The Obama Biden logo floats onto the screen and fades into a blue background. The words VOTE NOV 4 fade in with www.barackobama.com on the bottom.

The sound of this ad is incredibly well choreographed, but bland and non-descript. The music sounds like a PBS after school special, made to augment the predictable raising of affect. It begins sparse, with a piano playing quarter notes and a synthesized flute playing a simple tonal melody. This grows in intensity quickly as synthesized stings and percussion are added into a rollicking mid-tempo smoothness. When Obama states that the American people are the answer, the piano kicks into a dense rhythmic accompaniment with a counter melody, dramatically leading up to a cesura on the dominant when Obama concludes his section on believing in American. The music drops out and we are left with a simple flute and guitar melody. Predictable,

affective, not intrusive, and perhaps less dramatic than one might expect when predicting the future and sculpting history.

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In August of 2007, John McCain ran a series of low-tech ads featuring him speaking about himself against a plain white background with simple scoring and minimal flash^{xciii}. One such ad featured him speaking about Teddy Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan and how he admired their vision of American greatness, another just about Reagan.

I changed my career because of Ronald Reagan. When I was in prison we heard a lot of anti-war speeches over the loudspeakers in our cells and we never heard about Ronald Reagan from the Vietnamese. But when new pilots started getting shot down they told us about this Governor of California and his wife who cared so much about us and then I had the privilege of knowing him. I enlisted as a foot soldier in the Reagan revolution. He still today, I think of him all the time and one of the things that caused our defeat in 2006 was that strayed from many of his principles. We forgot where we were and who we are. And we came to Washington to change government, government changed us. We began to value power over principle. Now it's time for us to go back to Ronald Reagan's principles and philosophy which really was a motivating factor for not just me but for a generation of Republicans. I am confident that the reason why I hold some of the philosophical views that I have are the inspiration of Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, there's no doubt about it. [During the final sentence of the text, a dark still fades onto the screen. It is a color photo of Ronald Reagan and a younger John McCain walking outside together engaged in serious conversation. Reagan is speaking and looking at his hands, as if visually demonstrating a point. The younger McCain is looking admiringly at the President. A spotlight illuminates Reagan in a halo of light, bringing him out of the dimness and into focus. It then pans over to McCain. On that image of McCain bathed in light, the photo fades into McCain's campaign logo.]

The narrative is accompanied, as are many McCain ads by quasi-military or patriotic muzak, most notably featuring a marching snare drum. In this incarnation, an electronic reed instrument plays a tonal melody in E over soft synthesized strings which moves slowly through I-V-IV chords, giving it a sense of unresolved motion and direction. The snare is punctuated by cymbal crashes at the end of each 8-bar phrase.

This ad may seem like a dedication and memoir, but it is also a melding of past and future. It implies the greatness of Reagan and the Reagan era and foresees a return to that poorly remembered historical moment, a return to greatness if the words of the unspoken but understood actions of the messiah are followed. The promise of a return to the past is as powerful and mystical as a utopian future.

The Democratizing Enchantment of the Ear

One of the many issues and critiques of analytical work on both advertising and magic is they commit a classic flaw – they are largely visually oriented^{cxciiv}. While modernity may have been erroneously labeled as the ocular age, its critiques often seem to be caught in the same paradigm. Many of the analyses of advertising and magic mention such sonic phenomena as charismatic speech, mystical chanting, and magical oratory but do not aggressively pursue these aural occurrences in their analyses. In one of these exceptions to this, Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Hearing Things* substantially takes up the role of the ear in enchantment^{cxcv}. Schmidt examines the auditory culture of enthusiastic Christianity and the commercial magic of the 18th and 19th century together in a brilliant exegesis on the soundscape that shaped US religious culture and enlightened skepticism. Schmidt points out, as does Jackson Lears, that rational Protestantism was not nationally pervasive and outside of Northern urban centers, enthusiastic religion was common. Schmidt's engages the role of hearing in the religious sector of the US that was not part of rationalized Protestantism and that was deeply involved with auditory relations with the divine^{cx cvi}. He even hints that the breaking of religious hierarchy lead to a democratizing of spiritualism that had a profound and shaping effect on our democratic political practices. This connection is intriguing and allows for his analyses to be related to political advertising culture.

One of the more interesting material connections is Schmidt's narrative and analyses of hearing voices. For enthusiastic Christians the audition of the voice of God or of Angels was not unusual. Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic who claimed near the end of his life to be hearing the constant banter of angels, had a substantial following in the US. Many who wandered the new Frontier as country preachers claimed to either have heard or to regularly hear the voice of God or the spirits. The voices that were heard came from

afar and from close, at times whispered in the ear of the faithful, at others emanating from a mysterious object (like the burning bush). In Schmidt's narratives, those whose ears become enchanted actively seek to enchant others through proselytizing in much the same general way that spin and advertising work through word of mouth, community leaders and opinion makers. The connections between hearing Christian messages and proselytizing and the practices of political campaigning are obvious, although more often than not the candidate's calling is into the service of country rather than divinity (however this distinction is becoming harder to maintain in recent years).

Schmidt also interrogates the role of secular magic in the displacing of these beliefs, marking them as superstition rather than faith. Instances of hearing God – through the whispering of angels, natural sounds like rolling thunder that were taken as direct answers from God, and hearing the music of the heavens – were part of the belief system of so-called enthusiastic Christians. For believers, the very immediacy of the divine in the everyday world was hinged on the ear rather than on the eye^{excvii}. These practitioners were often called upon by the Divine to preach, had their prayers answered by signs and often heard and were given instructions concerning their daily problems through the ear. They embodied the very split that rational Protestant culture envisioned of itself – of the ear being irrational and the eye being clear and critical. On this point, direct speech, free of guile and innuendo was striven for among those who considered themselves to be rational^{excviii}. This emphasis extended from business practices to personal relations to religious services and beliefs.

Those who considered themselves enlightened doubted the worth of the raucous gatherings of this other brand of Christianity, best put in the dictum that more souls were begat than saved at tent revivals. They considered enthusiasts to be irrational and

superstitious, their gatherings characterized by noise and filth. Natural magic, as Schmidt terms the machinery used to stage the illusions of magic, was used to debunk these practices of hearing things, so profoundly a part of enthusiasm, as being nothing but trickery of some vein or another. But the explanation for the hearing of sounds, whether divine or debased, does not change the idea that the ear was the broadly considered to be the more deceivable organ and that its disciplining was sought after in the 19th and early 20th century US^{excix}, just as the disciplining of the imagination was during the Enlightenment.

While enchantment is the property of the ear, so is democracy according to Schmidt, who takes into account both non-hierarchical Christianity and Dewey's statement on politics, that while the eye is the mode of the spectator, the ear is participatory^{cc}. The democratizing of Christianity, in the form of enthusiastic religion which did not reserve places for heredity, indoctrination or the seminarian, required the ear to be enchanted – tuned in to the heavens and to mystical signs – and open to persuasion. Anyone who heard the word of the Divine was called upon to preach it, could establish a church, and had the right to publicly read scripture. It also required that experience of the divine word and sign be available to all who would listen, a far cry from the systemization and exclusive hierarchy of both rational Protestant Christianity and Catholicism. This democratizing through the ear is what Schmidt hints was a precursor for the rhetoric, if not the practices, of US-style democracy.

Enthusiasm is no longer only for religion in the backwards parts of the growing and unpopulated frontier. It is solidly a part of US public culture, from the celebrity system that makes everything from movies and magazines to TV dinners marketable, to the political campaign. Public interest in a candidate, their electability, largely hinges on

the creation of barely controlled but tightly orchestrated ardor, fervor and zeal. The spectacle of hordes of supporters rallying at the foot of the podium is an occurrence and an image that politics can not do without. For one, the state has moved in to govern more elements of social life and we increasingly turn to politicians, not divinity, to solve our problems. For another, the totality of statistic, including what Foucault saw as the economization of government^{cc*i*} allows for our ills to be attributed to the government rather than to spiritual failings. We are plagued by lack of money, healthcare, housing and opportunity rather by lack of faith or grace. With this turn, our enthusiasm is also re-directed to these figures who hold the magical power to affect our lives for good and ill, as if they control the natural world^{cc*ii*}. The hopeful prayers of enthusiasts are similar to the desperate pleas of citizens for legislation and political, no less passionate or devout. Enthusiastic supports also hear voices speaking to them from near and far, from the television or the radio, calling them to action. They, like their Christian counterparts, know exactly where and who the voices come from, sense a duty and responsibility and answer to a direct calling – as Barack Obama stated in his speeches, “one voice can change the world.” This is not much different than the voices that spoke to the Apostle Paul in light and Moses in the burning bush, tasking them with transformation. In modernity, politics and religion can be synonymous, their practices and discourses shared and their magic comparable.

*I arrived at Investco Field with a group of delegates, alternates and staffers from the Texas Democratic Party. We stood on line with throngs of others, jockeying for position and chatting excitedly with each other. When we finally got to the security tent, there were rows of metal detectors and check points and we split up. He gave me a big hug as we parted ways, me to find a fellow intern who had saved a seat for me earlier, he to find his son, who is a staffer for a State Senator. He gave me that knowing look, like we both had the same feeling about what this evening was going to be and there was no need to say it. **Remember**, he said to me in reference to an earlier conversation about religion*

*and politics, **this here is your church.** With that he disappeared into the crowd headed for the floor seats.*

In Democratic politics, the ear remains enchanted and the mystical chants of politics – the constructors of worlds – are open and available, necessarily public. Campaign catch phrases and common chants are utilized in order to sing candidates to power^{cciii}. But the enchantment of the ear does not come through words alone. There are the multiple myths, the charismatic oratory, the hearing of the self in the participatory action, the affects that are created through spin, and the illusions that come through both sound and sight^{cciv}. Political enchantment is a full- and out-of-body experience, which necessitates the ear as much as they eyes, skin, mouth, tongue and nose. We are still living in a magical era promises of magical transformation linked to political and national myths are propagated by charismatic spokesmen thanks in part to the illusions of natural magic and the cultivation of affect through which both illusion and self-illusion are culled.

On stage at Investco field were a host of musicians: Stevie Wonder, John Legend, Will.i.am, Cheryl Crowe, the Agape International Choir, and Michael McDonald. They came from multiple performing backgrounds, from Neo-Soul, hip-hop, adult contemporary, rock, pop, gospel and so-called ‘women’s music’, each with its own audiences. Some had cache with the greater Obama campaign, like Will.i.am and John Legend who had been influential in putting together the viral video of ‘Yes We Can’ that logged tens of millions of hits on youtube.com, and Stevie Wonder whose hit ‘Signed, Sealed, Delivered’ had been the sound of the Obama campaign since the Iowa Caucuses. Others offered narratives that accompany their presence: hipness, struggle, survival, rebirth, blackness, gender, supernatural ability. Their performances were interspersed with notable speakers like Al Gore, Bill Richardson and John Kerry. Each of these performances was carefully crafted to have deeper meaning than the music or the lyrics. The tiny figures on stage, amplified by the jumbotrons on which most of the attendants watched the performances, were embedded with power beyond their presence, a power that was sung to life through their music and the incredible response of the thousands cheering.

Perhaps the most oddly placed and deeply overtured was the performance by Michael McDonald, former rock superstar lead singer of the Doobie Brothers turned adult contemporary hit maker, who had recently released a critically-acclaimed album of

his favorite Motown songs. At the convention he was the final live music act and played a voice and piano version of 'America the Beautiful,' channeling the spirit of Ray Charles, who was the first high-profile artist to inject the flavors of gospel and rhythm and blues into the patriotic anthem. He sat alone on the stage in front of his electric piano, mouth tightly pressed to the microphone, separated only by his signature white beard. He crooned the anthem as he accompanied himself, free to melismatically embellish the melody in his soft and throaty voice. On a night which buzzed with shattered barriers and triumph, what power was magically sung into being by McDonald singing Ray Charles singing America the Beautiful?

^{cxiii} "Real and Potent" magic is taken from Simon During's (2002) *Modern Enchantments*. He juxtaposes this with what he terms 'secular magic' that which has not resonance with the supernatural and is mechanical, scientific and theatrical by design and performance.

^{cxiv} We need only recall the fable told about Thomas Jefferson, who had a face that said "yes," a story told in relation to John McCain.

^{cxv} Frazer (1890), *The Golden Bough*, pg. 9.

^{cxvi} Frazer defines contagion as a principle, "that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after physical contact has been severed." Quoted in Taussig, 1993, 52-53.

^{cxvii} Of particular note is Ann Coulter's book *Democrats are Stupid (if they were smart they would be Republicans)*, an example of quasi-rational political critique of political followers. Also in the category of professional debunking/enchanting is the news media, which provides analysis, positive and skeptical, for public consumption. Charles Green's critique of the media – stating that the true power of the media lies in making stories stories through coverage (also echoed by Noam Chomsky in his film *Manufacturing Consent*) did play a role in the primary races and post-election critiques, with those on the losing side blaming the media for deifying Obama (Green in *The Media and the Public*, ed. Casey Ripley jr.)

^{cxviii} Taussig, 1993, pg. 8.

^{cxix} Both Simon During (2002) and Leigh Eric Schmidt (2000) both point out that the skepticism of magic, and therefore the irrationality of naïveté of those enchanted with it was an essential force in the movement of the Enlightenment and the rationalizing of Western culture. Those who were skeptical needed magic to criticize and debunk, as well as causally enjoy, to prove their enlightened status. For During, this came in the form of magic shows and the sport of guessing how the trick was done. For Schmidt it came in the silences of rationalized Protestant worship as well as in the scientific understanding of 'natural magic' in the form of ventriloquism, mirrors and sound tubes.

^{cx} Brian Currid (2006) makes an excellent case for the study of the phenomena of normalcy when examining the auditory culture of Nazi Germany. He chooses not to dwell on the horrors of the events and their dramatic nature, but rather to ask the question of what made this soundscape, one that we connect with monstrosity and atrocity, seem so normal and everyday.

^{cxvi} Cited in *Mimesis and Alterity*, p. 278 n3.

^{cxvii} Benjamin, Walter, 'One Way Street', *Reflections*.

^{cxviii} Lears (1994) notes that magical transformation in the form of the acquisition of wealth through capitalism necessitated the kind of city/country lore that Raymond Williams addresses in *The City and the Country*.

^{cxix} Also see Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Hearing Things* for an excellent account of the auditory culture of early enthusiastic and evangelical Christianity and its relationship to magic and industrial rationality.

^{cx} Twitchell (1996), as well as Taussig (1993) and Lears (1996), often refer to James Frazier's *The Golden Bough* when writing about magic. His dichotomy between imitative and contagious magic still resonates with many magical analyses. In this case, the magic that Twitchell is addressing is both, with the ailment most often being delivered through contagion and the cure through imitation.

While not citing magic, Roland Marchand (1985) points to the ways in which ailments were invented by advertising firms in the 1930s to move products that either no longer had use or that were new and in search of a market.

^{cxlvii} Simon, Richard. "Advertising as Literature: The Utopian Fiction of the American Marketplace." *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 22 (2) 1980 154-74.

^{cxlviii} Levi-Strauss (1967), 'The Sorcerer and his Magic' in *Structural Anthropology*.

^{cxlix} The issue of magic's interchange with anxiety will be visited below in regard to Levi-Strauss and Michael Taussig's work.

^{cl} The idea of the creation of new worlds will be visited below in the section on political shamen.

^{cli} See Lears (1996), Marchand (1985), *Advertising the American Dream*, Ewen (1976), and the introduction to Thomas Frank's (1997) *The Conquest of Cool*, for histories of advertising that chronicle major shifts in the practice and culture of advertising.

^{clii} Marchand (1985) uses the phrase "frothy pink irrationality" to describe the image of what advertising men thought was in the heads of women.

^{cliii} Gradually, as Lears, Marchand and Frank (cited above) point out, advertising moved away from being text and narrative heavy and began to rely more on images, slogans, branding and catch-phrases.

^{cliv} Frank, Thomas, cited above.

^{clv} In 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man' Walter Benjamin (1978) begins with the magical nature of language and in particular the act of naming.

^{clvi} Also see Schmidt (2000), cited above.

^{clvii} Discourses about the economy, especially in the area of job creation, debt reduction, increased of decreased spending, are what I term quantifiable. By contrast, freedom, prosperity, security and equality are qualitative.

^{clviii} Edelman (1971), *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*. This will be revisited below.

^{clix} Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*.

^{clx} For more on history as fact, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, chapter 1.

^{clxi} I refer to Michael Taussig's use of the term from *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wildman*. He states that "...implicit social knowledge can be thought of as one of the dominant faculties of what it takes to be a social being," (393). Levi-Strauss also addresses this issue of social knowledge in reference to the magic of *The Sorcerer and his Magic*. For him, magic as social knowledge reorganizes the world to make order out of chaos and uncertainty, calming anxiety and psychological despair. Problems are created such that magical cures can be performed and again reinforce order and stability. I will go into this further below when I speak of *generalized mysticism*, but suffice it to say that as liberal democratic citizens we are allowed to have a vision of the future which we are free to enact through specific social institutions. Our relationship with these institutions is part of what it means to be a social being, especially during the past two years when, as I said above, politics became a lingua franca. Cited in the paragraph preceding the quote are Warren Susman's (1984) *Culture as History* and Murray Edelman's (1971) *Politics as Symbolic Action*.

^{clxii} Michael Taussig, in both *Colonialism, Shamanism and the Wildman* and *The Magic of the State* does an impressive job of deconstructing the enchantments that the state imbues its native and imported peoples, landscapes, power systems, and economic systems with, as well as showing the ways in which these powers are appropriated by and function within the citizenry.

^{clxiii} The organizational power of the narrative, best formulated by Hayden White (1987) but also deployed and re-theorized by Paul Ricoeur (1980), and owing much to Warren Sussman (1984), is informative here. As a way to grasp history, or rather past events, narratives and the narrativity of events are a necessity. Perhaps the Derridean (1976) critique of the book as transcendent is also applicable, as the narrative, that which denudes and deludes, is made necessary by the form of the book, as much as by the form of writing. The completeness of the narrative, the closed ends, directly correspond to the form of the book.

^{clxiv} I am using Walter Benjamin's notion of the allegory, which animates commodities in the present, turning them into signs that communicate in the passing contemporary moment and are just as quickly disposed of. Also see 'Benjamin's Theory of Allegory', Bainard Cowan (1981).

^{clxv} For further discussions on speed and modernity, see Paul Virilio's (1986) *Speed and Politics* and David Harvey's *The Postmodern Condition*. Both theorists see a key element of modernity as the movement of people, images, and ideas. Harvey characterizes this as 'time-space compression'.

^{clxvi} Benjamin, (1968) 'Theses on the Philosophy of History, VI' "...even *the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."

^{clxvii} Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, ed. New York: Schocken, 1968. p. 254

^{clxviii} Although no research has been done on this particular topic, one might speculate that in the days of Grand Opera, with its pyrotechnics and complex backstage machinery, as well as its multi-tiered seating by

class and rank, the literally transcendent judgment of fellow participants was part of the ruling classes' enjoyment of the theater. For accounts of early listening practices in relation to judgment and enlightened reason see Tomlinson's (1990) *Metaphysical Song*, Steinberg's (2004) *Listening to Reason* and Johnson's *Listening in Paris*.

^{clxix} Trouillot, Michel, Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. pp 1-8.

^{clxx} Twitchell, 1995, Taussig, 1987 and 1993.

^{clxxi} Along with Hobbes and Spinoza, see During, 2002, pp. 14-16.

^{clxxii} Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large*.

^{clxxiii} Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*. Also see Erlmann (1999), *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* for his definition of the imagination. He defines it as "an articulation of interests, languages, styles, and images" that supported and created global fictions about otherness, specifically concerning South Africa. This idea of the imagination as communal property also marks a radical departure from Hobbes and Spinoza who saw it as both social – the masses collectively has active imaginations – but also saw it as the individual's role to control it (or the benevolent government's).

^{clxxiv} While Ewen (1996) and to a certain extent Habermas (1989) insist that consumers are the unknowing dupes of advertising and PR, I believe it is more complex than that. Aspiration to certain states of being is a choice, and the information to debunk such false images is readily available. The desire to be something, or a part of something is truly a match between belief and skepticism.

^{clxxv} In an article in *The Atlantic*, Marc Ambiner (2009) chronicles the path of the Obama campaign through US racial terrain. He notes that many black communities were hesitant to support him early on because they were not assured of his victory. Beyond racial politics, black voters were more concerned with ousting the Republican party from the oval office than with electing Barack Obama, until his notable performances in Iowa and on Super Tuesday.

^{clxxvi} Frazer (1890) states that at one time, Kings were responsible not only for predictions of the future, but also for causing the future in the form of controlling the natural world.

^{clxxvii} See During, 2002, pg 13., and Schmidt, 2000 chapters 3-4.

^{clxxviii} See Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, and *The Magic of the State*, for a deep discussion on these interplays in Colombia.

^{clxxix} Informative here are critiques of the state by Foucault and Lukacs. In Foucault's reading of the large-scale changes in government, he sees a shift from the management of land to the management of people to finally the managing of economy (See Foucault 1979, 1991, 2003). This squarely places economists into a pivotal role as experts and advisors (Ewen (1996) places emphasis on economist Rex Tugwell as the mastermind behind the New Deal as opposed to Roosevelt who was the spokesman). For Lukacs, law disenfranchises citizens by transforming language into the code of power. To fight these codes, one must also know the law in all of its linguistic gesticulations, its twists and turns (1971). If one looks at the US presidency and the senate, many of them have graduated from Law and Business school.

^{clxxx} Although the parameters of the public sphere are up for intense discussion, my own experience hanging out and talking politics with various individuals has shown that predicting the future consequences of proposed action, with a greater or lesser certainty, is common if not pervasive.

^{clxxxi} Dewey (1927) critiqued this process insisting that national government policy is far too complex for short speeches and is beyond the realm of what ordinary citizens can either comprehend, or are willing to put the time into to grasp and fully understand (Dewey did not doubt the intellect of his fellow men, but rather their willingness to spend time with the necessary materials). While voters claimed to know the inevitable outcome of policy, more often than not, according to Dewey, they were swayed by familiar slogans, historical bonds with a party or candidate, or by the feelings they had towards a persuasive figure.

^{clxxxii} This is another reference to Jim Spencer's presentation, referred to 'Ethnography' concerning community leaders and opinion makers, and to Stewart Ewen and James Twitchell's observation that both the aim of spin (and advertising), as well as its most potent force, are our friends, neighbors and selves who repeat and reproduce these opinions as our own.

^{clxxxiii} In Adorno and Horkheimer's (2002) *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the totalitarian system of Enlightenment is portrayed as a vicious systemization of everything, both man-made and natural. That which does not fit a system – including meaning, understanding and non-instrumental thinking – is excluded, exterminated or transformed. In this system, numbers are the key to this instilling this: everything must be quantifiable. The mathematics that move from Bacon to Leibniz up to Wittgenstein and Russell, an arbitrary process that Marx and Foucault saw as dehumanizing, are the product of this move to universalize and categorize. Anything that could not be quantified, counted and reduced to one was, according to

Adorno and Horkheimer, “an illusion,” (4). But in this in turn is deconstructed to show that Enlightenment itself is its own mythology, science and mimesis share the same method and that the truths which once bolstered animism, religion and universal fear of the natural world are what now support reason, science and logic.

^{clxxxiv} In one of the most damning critiques of political image campaigns, Walter Benjamin (1969) states that “This training made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren.” ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History, XII’

^{clxxxv} Overing, Joanna, ‘Shaman as Maker of Worlds: Nelson Goodman in the Amazon’. *Man*, vol. 25 No. 4, Dec. 1990, pp. 602-19.

^{clxxxvi} Two notes – first, Goodman uses art as a blanket term for the arts, his theory of the creative nature of art extends into visual art, dance, music, literature and poetry. Second, this line of thinking is not unique to Goodman. For further discussion on this point, see Marcuse’s *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (and indeed much of Adorno’s writing on music)

^{clxxxvii} Lev-Strauss, while not offering the shamen quite as much agency as Overing vis-à-vis Goodman, also saw Sorcerers as those who keep order, in essence securing worlds, rather than making them. See The ‘Sorcerer and His Magic’, cited above.

^{clxxxviii} See Taussig, *The Magic of the State, The Shaman, Colonialism and The Wildman and Mimesis and Alterity*.

^{clxxxix} See Feinberg, Benjamin (2003), *The Devil’s Book of Culture*, Jose Limon (1994), *Dancing with the Devil*, Alan Greenberg (1994), *Love in Vain: a Vision of Robert Johnson*, Robert Walser (1993), *Running with the Devil* to name a few of the American variants on the classic story by Goethe’s *Faust*.

^{cxc} Linguist George Lakoff in *Moral Politics* points to key organizational metaphors which bring together groups that have differing material interests and realities. For Lakoff, the party that represents itself metaphorically as the strict father appeals to conservatives who identify with that image. The comparison metaphor for liberals is the nurturing parent. Both of these metaphors characterize the policies and ground legitimating behind the belief in the differing agendas. While this does explain the conflicts and contradictions between some of the base groups that bolster the two major political parties, it does not explain the objective lack of variation in the overall clamor of voices in Washington, which is where the magic of creating worlds comes into play – the condition of possibilities is sharply limited, despite out own discourse of diversity and opposition.

^{cxc} As mentioned earlier, the invocation of Ronald Reagan among Republicans, and the constant comparisons drawn between Obama and John F. Kennedy are cases of this. Also, the Republican party’s invocation of ‘The Party of Lincoln’ is another case of mystical communion. Overing talks about how Piaroan ruwang are able to walk between the ‘now time’ and ‘before time’ to seek remedies. In much the same way, politicians are able to channel the successes of men like Ronald Reagan, stripping away the complexities of the time and the place of their existence, and constructing worlds – in the form of problems and solutions – based on their successes and myths.

^{cxcii} National policy does change because of events and the presidency of George W. Bush is a prime example. Bush ran on a platform of tax reform, isolationism and small government. After the events of Sept. 11th, 2001, a mere nine months into his presidency, his policies changed drastically, resulting in the largest government in US history and international involvement in armed conflict, new defense treaties with Europe and expanded trade deficits, especially with China.

^{cxciii} One such ad has been cited about, with McCain speaking of his qualifications.

^{cxciv} For thorough critiques of visual culture’s deafness see Stern’s (2003) *The Audible Past*, Schmidt’s *Hearing Things* and Erlmann’s *Hearing Cultures*.

^{cxcv} Taussig’s *Mimesis and Alterity* offers a phenomenology of the chanter and *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wildman* offers an insightful critique of Levi-Strauss’ program of structurally ordering of the processes of magic (with an aside of Victor Turner’s *Ritual Process*), he does not give the ear the same satisfying and in-depth treatment that he gives the visual. He does however ask a key question upon learning that the image of white explorers were made into Cuna curing dolls: What magic lies in this, my wooden self, sung to power in a language I cannot understand? (1993, pg. 8). While Taussig focuses on the images of curing dolls, he does not delve into his own statement, that they are *sung* to power rather than possessing power by their likeness. The elements of chant and audition here a stone left unturned in the theory of the enchanted ear (and voice).

^{cxcvi} Schmidt cites the etymology of *mysticism*, which comes from the Greek word meaning a closing of the eyes (p 7).

^{cxcvii} One remembers that in scripture looking on the face of God was not only a rarity, it also caused harm to the viewer, but to hear the word of God, through dreams, angelic messengers or directly, was common enough.

^{cxcviii} This sort of ‘truth’ in speech defined advertising as it was codified in the early 20th century against its history of deceit and trickery. Although advertising has given this up, it was again manifested in John McCain’s early campaign slogan ‘Straight Talk’ and the name of his fleet of busses, *The Straight Talk Express*.

^{cxcix} Schmidt covers this topic extensively in the Introduction. Although Schmidt does not cite this, the disciplining of the ear is perhaps a key component of Quaker services, which are characterized by both democracy and silence. For as much emphasis as is put on listening in the practices of the Quaker faith, it is not mystical at all and focuses on inner listening and being moved to speak by the spirit, but in a very rationalized way.

^{cc} Quoted in Schmidt, p. 34, originally in Dewey, 1927, p. 218-19.

^{cci} Foucault, Michel, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College of France, 1975-6*. NY: Picador, 2003, and ‘Governmentality’ in *The Essential Foucault*, Rabinow and Rose, eds. NY: The New Press, 1994.

^{ccii} Much more can be made of this point. For one, legalities like in loco parentis laws have injected the state and its institutions into the role of family, making the state responsible for protection and education, formerly performed through divine institutions and province. This is but one example of the state taking over functions that were deeply or mildly involved with religious practice.

^{cciii} See Taussig, 1993, quoted above. Although the practice of singing to power has been replaced by chanting to power (in reference to chants like *four more years, we want change, O-ba-ma* and *U-S-A*, all heard on the campaign trail over the last decade) Kennedy’s campaign did pass out lead sheets for High Hopes and had the audience sing it together as Kennedy walked onstage. In the Kennedy archives, there is footage of such practices from town hall meetings in Wisconsin.

^{cciv} It is noted that little advertising happens without music in Gorn (1982).

Noriega versus Cornyn: Mimesis, Parody and Location in the 2008 Texas Senate Race

The Challenger^{ccv}:

On paper Rick Noriega was the perfect challenger, he had all of the pieces, a record of public service, appeal to different demographics, and hailed from Houston, the ultimate modern metropol and the largest city in the Texas. Rick Noriega, Congressman Noriega, Col. Noriega, or just the Colonel, is nine-year state congressman from District 145, a working-class Latino district of Houston. Early in life he was an outstanding student and an excellent athlete, played baseball at a junior college before finishing his schooling on an ROTC scholarship at the University of Houston. Upon graduation he became a commissioned officer in the Texas National Guard and served in the Middle East before earning a master's degree from Harvard's JFK School of Public Policy and running for state congress. He was the only Texas legislator ever to miss session because of active duty when his troop was deployed to Afghanistan to train Afghani forces in 2004.

As a legislator he championed education, constantly advocating for freezing tuition at state institutions to allow working class and low income students to attend. In the wake of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, he supported veterans' rights, pushing for more state support for returning veterans services. He led National Guard relief efforts for hurricane Katrina refugees in Houston and the clean-up and relief efforts on the gulf coast after hurricane Ike. On paper, he could use his service record to appeal to the many veterans in Texas – both young and old – who are mostly thought of as being more conservative and voting Republican. His experiences in the Middle East could give him credibility and expertise on national security and foreign policy. He could appeal to Latino voters, working-class voters, yellow-dog Democrats, Houstonians, and the list

goes on. On paper, he was the perfect foil for the Democrats' bid to unseat the incumbent junior senator John Cornyn.

The Champ:

Cornyn is the consummate good old boy. He is bland on the outside, seemingly likeable, white, a little overweight, white-haired and married with two daughters. He advocates for owning firearms and is an avid hunter. The son of a former WWII POW Air Force bomber pilot-turned Air Force dentist, he was raised all over the South as well as in Japan. Also an avid athlete, he was an intramural football, basketball and racquetball player and was honored during his senior year as 'Outstanding Intramural Athlete' by his alma mater, Trinity University in San Antonio.

By education Cornyn is a lawyer who worked his way up from being a successful trial lawyer, specializing in defending medical professionals in malpractice suits, to State Supreme Court Justice, to Texas Attorney General, and now junior Senator and staunch conservative. As the first Republican Attorney General since Reconstruction, he championed prayer in schools, the death penalty, and won massive settlements for the state in cases of insurance fraud. His duties as Texas' attorney general put him in front of the highest court in the nation, the US Supreme Court, twice. As a senator he floated a Constitutional amendment that would have banned the burning of the United States Flag, which was unsuccessful. Over the last three years he has been awarded by a prodigious number of organizations, many of which involve small business, religious organizations and tax reform advocates.

The Battlefield:

The race for Texas' junior senate seat was a referendum on multiple political fronts. On trial was the legacy of President George W. Bush, the future of the Republican Party in Texas, the potential rebirth of the Texas Democratic Party, interpretations of the future of Texas, and the very form of the ideal candidate. Socially, Texas' problems were shared by many: a poor and uneven public education system driven by the state-administered TAKS test, many in the state without insurance, including one in seven children according to popular statistics, a high number of veterans returning from the ongoing wars in the Middle East with health and readjustment problems, growing unemployment, and state coffers emptying faster than they were being filled. As the seat of big oil, Texas had been under a microscope for both windfall oil profits at a time of record fuel prices, as well as for off-shore drilling and the drive towards increasing domestic production of energy and alternative sources. On top of all of this, Texas has the longest border with Mexico of any US state, and as such has been at the forefront of the debate around border security and immigrants' rights.

Although Texas has not voted for a Democrat for president since Jimmy Carter in 1976, it has long been a stronghold of Democratic power, from Lyndon Johnson's time in the Senate and the Oval Office to the reign of Speakers of the House Sam Rayburn and Jim Wright, Senator Bob Eckhardt, and Senate power broker Lloyd Bentson. Since Texas Republicans established both their dominance in state and national politics, holding formidable majorities in both the upper and lower houses through the late 1990s and into the 2006 elections, Texas Democrats have dreamed of and worked to recreate the golden age of Texas Democratic politics. Part of that vision was the reclaiming of national seats, made especially difficult by the contested off-year re-districting executed by Republican

Sugarland Representative Tom Delay, which displaced a number of house Democrats by altering their districts to include more historically conservative populations.

Over the 2004 and 2006 election cycles, the Republican stranglehold on power loosened. Thanks to a well-planned and grueling campaign by local and state-wide leaders, in 2006 Democrats successfully took over the metropolitan Dallas County, winning majority seats ‘from the courthouse to the state house.’^{ccvi} With the turning of Dallas County, other counties began to make similar plans with the same vision and strategy: a unified top-to-bottom approach to regaining power. Republican attempts to unseat US Congressmen Chet Edwards of Waco and Sylvestre Reyes of El Paso had failed, giving the party a sense of successfully resisting both redistricting, in the case of Edwards, and financial deficits, in the case of Reyes. In the summer of 2008, Fort Worth Rep. Kirk England officially switched his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat, stating that the Republican party had lost touch and no longer represented the interests of his constituents (he then proceeded to defend his seat as a Democrat in the 2008 election). US Representative Tom Delay, once the symbol of Texas power and the Republican Party Whip, had been forced out of the House because of unethical practices, including involvement with the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal. Last but not least, the popularity of George W. Bush was far from its peak of over 90% after the incidents of September 11th. It was against this backdrop that Rick Noriega and John Cornyn would do battle: an emboldened Democratic party climbing out of powerlessness with sights set on past glory, and an entrenched Republican party with national standing, a defined power base, and money to burn.

Cornyn had been swept into power on the heels of Bush’s Texas Republican Revolution in 1994 when Bush, son of the first Republican president from Texas,

unseated Democratic Gov. Anne Richards. That era also saw the rise of now-disgraced Congressman Tom Delay, affectionately known as The Hammer, who served as the US House of Representatives disciplinarian. In Texas, the Republicans gained formidable majorities in both houses and dominated the legislative process with little possible legislative resistance short of the famous ‘Killer Ds’ who fled to New Mexico and Oklahoma to avoid taking part in legislation that they considered to be detrimental to the people of the state, contested off-year redistricting included in that legislation.

While Cornyn was associated with the George W. Bush through their brief Texas association, their ties were not as strong as the bonds between Bush and those who he brought to Washington. While their Texas association was public and well-known, Cornyn’s direct benefits were marginal. He did not play a significant role within the party during the Bush years and did not chair influential committees while the Republicans held the majority. He was never lumped into the group of Texas Bush allies who accompanied the president to Washington, a group that included Harriet Meyers, Alberto Gonzalez and Scott McClellan^{ccvii}. He did, however publicly back the policies of the President, from tax cuts to the unpopular ChIP vetoes domestically, to the wars on terror abroad.

One of the overriding questions among Texas pundits and politicians was whether or not Cornyn could free himself from his record of consistently voting alongside a president with record low approval ratings, even in his home state. At a time when change was on everyone’s lips – Democrat and Republican alike – could Cornyn truly be a candidate that represented anything but the status quo? Indeed this race would be about self re-definition as much as it would answer the question about the necessity for change within the Republican Party: do they still have a base big enough to sustain them on a

platform that dates back to Ronald Reagan and even to Richard Nixon? Do the rallying cries of small government, national defense, lower taxes, and public faith and morality still bring voters to the polls in numbers big enough to win in Texas?

But even as Noriega represented change from the old guard, there was still the burning question of whose interpretation of Texas' needs would prevail. Did Texas need immigration, or were undocumented workers part of the problem? What form was border security to take to face this (non) issue? Was there more land to drill, more oil reserves to tap, or should the money for these ventures be funneled to so-called Green and Alternative Energy projects like wind and solar (or the less-mentioned bio-fuels)? With the large numbers of uninsured adults and children in Texas, should the government step in and expand programs like CHIP, Medicare and Medicaid, or can incentives given to private insurance companies to meet those needs? How can a candidate distance himself from unpopular wars and still maintain politically expedient patriotism and support for veterans? Before a solution can be envisioned, there was to be a battle over the interpretation of the state and needs of Texas, a battle fought in the realm of spin, in ads and in the words of experts and spokes people from within and outside of the state.

As the interpretive battle was gearing up, another concern arose: what sort of candidate was needed to meet these needs? Texas has a long history of oppositional strongmen, the new political cowboys who are fiercely individual, rugged and willing to fight against everything, including compromise. But the growing force of the Obama campaign and his message of unity and compromise had brought the question of the political monad into new light: is the ideal candidate an island unto himself or a great negotiator? The form of the two candidates, Cornyn the radical individual and Noriega

the team leader, would become more and more polarized and play out in their campaigning.

The field which they were to criss-cross for ten months is also one that bears heavily on the race at hand. Texas' history is a source of great tension between the groups that inhabit it, but is also full of narrative energy which serves to simultaneously cook up an interesting combination of militant localism and aggressive nationalism. Texas truly has a great sense of itself, a legend in its own mind, if you will. It embodies the Americana of the Wild West, the cowboy and the rugged individual on a grand scale, in many ways still considering itself to both be a nation apart and a standard bearer of patriotism. After the famous resistance of the French President Jacques Chirac to endorse US military action against Iraq, combined with tension between the French cycling establishment and then-dominant Tour De France competitor and Austinite Lance Armstrong, bumper stickers with slogans like 'Texas is Bigger than France' and 'First Iraq then France' started popping up. The French president's affront to fellow Texans, as well as to the plan for the national security of the US, brought out both the local pride and national fervor, often with the common rejoinder 'Don't Mess With Texas'. There is a definite sense that Texas, in a grim reference to former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, can go it alone, as a nation unto itself.

Along with having the image of Texas as its own nation, which it was briefly before joining the United States just in time to secede with the Confederacy, it also embodies a kind of hybrid, dialectical nationalism. While the feeling of the Republic of Texas is everywhere – particularly in the omni-presence of the Texas Flag – there is also a sense of being American and ultra-patriotic in a multiplicity of senses. Both major parties, as well as the many libertarian-leaning supporters of Texas Congressman Ron

Paul, all claim their patriotism and love of country. Some claim it oppositionally, bolstering their own claims of patriotism by critiquing others', notably in quoting the founding fathers or interpreting the constitution against their opponents. These techniques came into full bloom post-9/11 with the passage of the infamous Patriot Act and the massive expenditures of federal funds on the war in Iraq. In the former case, the sense of love of country mixes with nationalism in a contradictory way. Claims of patriotism take the form of fending off the government by using its own charter and retreating into the mindset of Confederacy. In the case of the latter rhetoric about the neglects of home and money being sent overseas abounded, especially in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

Both partisans and citizens, while claiming patriotism and devotion to country, also insist that Texas is different, and that being a Texan is different, something other than being an American but not opposed to it, just other, more of an excess or appendage. This raises particularly interesting lines of allegiance that play out in interesting ways on political turf. Politically, the stories of conflict between Howard Dean and Boyd Richie (the DNC chairman and the chair of the Texas Democratic Party) trickled down through the Dems office. Richie, like other chairmen before him, had difficulty towing the proposed national Democratic line because, as is often said, Texas Dems are different^{ccviii}. Former Texas Chairman Bob Slagle cornered me at the National Convention and told me about his conflicts with then Speaker of the House and close personal friend Jim Wright, and a former employee of the TDP who had been involved with politics for well over a decade constantly talked about how things just worked differently in Texas. The fierce independence of Texas politicians does not work well with a party that is striving for national unity and a singular message and platform.

The Texas stage was then set for a major confrontation between candidates, political interests, interpretations, parties and histories. The showdown between the Democrats seeking unity and the Republicans making themselves over, the present identity of a Red State versus the history of a Blue State, nationalism and regionalism were all deeply enmeshed in the race between Cornyn and Noriega. Advertising, the public face of both candidates, would take on these conflicts in the form of mimesis, parody and cosmopolitanism.

Mimesis and Parody: Politics in Public

The advertising in this race heavily involved mimesis and parody, neither of which is exceptional in the realm of political advertising (or US advertising in general). These two actions, in the political realm, often occur on two levels: politicians mimicking the behaviors of their constituencies (think George W. Bush landing in full flight regalia aboard a Naval vessel), and politicians mimicking politicians, becoming politicians, if you will (think Barack Obama traveling to Europe during his campaign)^{ccix}. Parody also works in the same two general ways, parodying of constituents and parodying of other politicians. The uses of these two mechanisms are often overlapping, with mimesis and parody both working to further the political becomings of candidates as well as to undercut and criticize their rivals.

As Walter Benjamin, the theorist of modern mimesis, reminds us, our mimetic selves have not disappeared, but have changed, now involving language in both its written and spoken forms^{ccx}. He writes about the mimetic as an aspect of man's endowments and asks if there is even one of man's higher functions that does not concern mimesis. Following Benjamin, Michael Taussig asks the question of the power of the

mimetic, of the appropriation of the actions, visage and being of an other. For both Taussig and Benjamin, there is a deep magic embedded in the practices of mimesis, a sympathetic magic^{ccxi}. Through certain acts of mimesis and recreation – through sound or image (often a totem) – the power of an object can be harnessed or its actions can be manipulated. When candidates are becoming-politician by adopting the public practices of those who went before them, they seek to harness their power, their success in the polls and their ability to function within the political system (no one mimics failed candidacies). When they end speeches with ‘God bless America’, talk about their family values or helping ‘working families’, they are becoming-politician by mimicking those who were successful. Likewise, when politicians mimic constituencies, by talking magnolia, donning clothing that speaks to local practices and ‘spontaneously’ visiting local establishments, they are seeking to influence behavior through mimesis.

As the modern incarnation of politics is repeatedly stripped of its connections to any sort of relation to the grand reason of the Enlightenment and the rhetoric of the 18th and 19th century founders of democracy, the role of modern mimesis looms large. As the projected and constructed images the candidates and their rhetorical words grow to prominence in the campaign, aided by the electronic age, the lengths to which mimesis becomes a key element of any campaign are shown^{ccxii}.

Campaigns attempt to mold their politicians into sounds, ideas and images that are appealing to voters, volunteers and donors. Histories are elided, erased and constructed, finishing touches down to lapel pins and hair color are doctored in imitation of people, places and popular sentiments. These activities each have a model, they are becomings: becoming viable, becoming likeable, becoming expert, becoming politician. As we will

see in the following analyses, these becomings borrow from many places and often strive to smooth over the contradictory elements of local and national.

Likewise, along with mimesis comes parody, the less serious form of borrowing and manipulating, and a political velvet hammer. Because of the public nature of political campaigning in the information age, with speeches and ads available for mechanical reproduction and manipulation, parody is always a possibility. Always depending on a contradiction or inconsistency, parodies seek to undo the careful becomings that turn citizens into politicians and officials, endowing them with power, prestige and capital, instead turning them into the vanquished and powerless. News and comedy shows like Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, or Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion* use parody for both laughs and pointed commentary during election seasons. However, in the advertising age, parody ads run into one large issue: advertising runs on repetition^{ccxiii}. In parodying a candidate, the competitor and critic risk advertising their competition by repeating names, slogans, ideas and images.

The race between Cornyn and Noriega had much of both. In the wake of a Republican meltdown, Cornyn was looking to reinvent himself, to re-model his mimetic object away from George W. Bush, the disgraced and irrelevant icons of Christian Right and the millennial war hawks. Noriega was looking to become a politician of national standing, to move beyond state and local government. The opening salvo in the advertising war was a musical parody that sparked a political parody (discussed below). As each of them opponents' strengths were played to in the mimetic game of becomings, parodies were made to counteract them.

These ad campaigns are definitely art in an age of mechanical reproduction in all of its connotations^{ccxiv}. They seek to produce likeness of image – of great political and

heroic figures, of localized life ways and popular mythologies. They perform Benjamin and others' fear of modern politics by aestheticizing part of the process, attempting to politicize art and politics^{ccxv}. The video parodies are able to slow down the natural lens of the eye and deconstruct the inconsistencies of political image and rhetoric, allowing for montages of heroism or buffoonery, power and defeat. They also allow for overt commentary, often in the form of setting the record straight or some other recourse to plain speak and honesty. They meet their audiences in a state of distraction, which they counteract with as much repetition as money allows^{ccxvi}.

Essential to the roles of mimesis and parody are the myriad issues of power in its many forms. The limits of the mimetic are tied to cultural limits: the imaginative limits of the public, financial constraints, and the networking abilities to manipulate media and produce spin. The latter is often as much a matter of cultural or symbolic capital as it is of the possession of the crucial campaign dollars. The power of these mimetic acts can also be connected to the charismatic power of the particular candidate in time and space^{ccxvii}, and the efficacy of their magic. As Fraser notes, it is knowledge that moves men away from magic and into a submissive state^{ccxviii}. Parody has often been a weapon of the weak, deployed when the resources of powerful becomings are not available, effective or productive. In our current age, where the internet is as far-reaching as television and radio, there are outlets for candidates who do not possess the capital to buy coveted air time. However the efficacy of the internet alone has yet to be assessed^{ccxix}.

On Cosmopolitanism^{ccxx}:

Parts of the cast conceptual framework on cosmopolitanism hold particular relevance for politics in Texas. Although the concept of cosmopolitanism in recent years has been developed by post-colonial scholars or theorists who live and work in countries

that have large diasporic populations, its historic concerns are relevant. While this is not the time to indulge in a long-scale regurgitation of the history of the term, it is worth remembering that the term can be traced to Kant, and its practices and techniques to the Roman Empire, the spread of the Sanskrit language, the Mongol Empire, the proliferation of Christianity and Islam through conquest and conversion, the European Colonial projects and finally our era of globalization and neo-liberalism^{ccxxi}. In his summary and analyses of two contrasting cosmopolitan literary traditions, those of the Roman Empire's spread of Latin and the spread of Sanskrit, Sheldon Pollack (2002) outlines one of the key concerns of the cosmopolitan – the methods of Imperial domination versus local appropriation (both carefully interconnected). Pollack looks at the divergent ways in which the spread of Sanskrit and Latin interacted with local practices of folklore, religion, law and commerce. What is critically at stake in his analyses are intra-local communications through the traveling of expressive culture, and the domination, devaluation and displacement of local cultural practice by new linguistic and cultural forms^{ccxxii}. Sanskrit as a form of writing was applied to local languages, making them intelligible but not uniform across time and space, necessitating translation and inter-communication. Latin aimed to displace both written and spoken systems, by excluding non-speakers and the illiterate from essential functions of governance and law as well as education.

Along the same lines, Derrida seeks to question the categories on which citizenship are built – the city/state, hospitality/duty, and seeks to reorient the politics of the state based on forms of solidarity that have yet to emerge from our current state formations. Kwame Appiah goes so far as to ask if we can even have a conversation with

the other because our ways of conceptualizing – definition, terminology, and relative significance – can potentially so radically different.

In the most macro-analytical and general sense, these thinkers, and myriad others who are working within the same milieu, are concerned with questions of the local, national, global, and trans-national, and the ethical and practical applications (again, I apologize for painting with such a wide brush)^{ccxxiii}. These questions find footing in Texas politics, as a sense of local and state identity are forced into dialogue and conflict with the national and, in the case of Texas and other border or immigration-heavy states, the trans-national. Symbols of local identity, often loose and contested, are deployed with and against the symbolic capital of the national and international. Senses of multiple belonging are put to the test; not the legal test, but the affective test. To which signifiers and bearers of social and symbolic capital will voters, volunteers and donors respond to? What combinations of local and extra-local, both positive and negative, are possible and affectively effective?

Within acts of voting, giving, acting and advertising (in the form of t-shirts, pins, yard signs and bumper stickers), the exercises of citizenship and allegiance are transposed into the questions of multiple allegiances and diverse belonging. These actions move to momentarily resolve the conflicts between the small and the large, and the yin-yang-like location of each within the other. In this system often there is no pure inside or outside, but an interplay and relationship of necessity between one and the other^{ccxxiv}. As the following analyses will demonstrate, the race for the Senate in Texas necessitated the demonstration of connections with local, national and trans-national cultures. However, the ways in which these cultural objects are re-presented and put into competition varied greatly.

The point of all political advertising, with its images and rhetoric, is, of course, spin. It is the artful creation of the candidates – one with a positive image (however that looks, feels and sounds), and one flawed, unfit, and *outside* of what is right. For most candidates these images are not drawn from their daily, ordinary lives, but are staged in a sort of anti/cosmopolitan bricolage, using the pieces that are available to them to assemble a new and improved, but historical whole. This whole plays with boundaries and definitions in attempts to affectively appeal to voters, turning them on to one candidate, turning them off another, or both simultaneously^{ccxxv}.

The most obvious example of this from the 2008 campaign cycle was the word “change” which was featured prominently in the Obama campaign. Due to the early onset of the Democratic race from the nomination, the word quickly spread, thanks to the charismatic campaigning of Obama and his well-mediatised surprise victories. Thanks to the popular appeal of “change” and the context in which it was used^{ccxxvi}, it became a campaign necessity, ensnaring politicians from all walks in its web. A politician could not run without being for change, even if they were the incumbent. How this was defined, however, varied greatly. Those who came to use the term late in the game, a clear act of mimesis, either turned a blind ear to the recent history of the usage or made the term a point of conflict between themselves and those who had popular possession of the word. Often they made a contradiction or parody out of the previous user to authenticate their own claims of being for change. Best of all, change was a complicated mess of the local and national. Obama claimed that change came to and not from Washington, a time-honored tactic. McCain claimed that Obama was in his political infancy and incapable of implementing the sort of sweeping change that is needed to remedy the economic crisis and the looming threat of global terrorism. Insider/outside, like the Maverick and Palin,

who knew both Washington and home, could be both effective and creative in solving these problems. This one simple word became the locus of mimesis, parody, and cosmopolitanism. As we will see below, this pattern was repeated in Texas for the Senate race.



On Friday June 13th, perhaps the most infamous piece of political advertising in 2008 aired, a parody called ‘Big John’. Of the more interesting parts of this particular specimen is that it is unclear whether it was ever intended to be an ad. The three-minute music video segment was used to introduce Senator John Cornyn to the Texas Republican delegation, and met with so much shock and awe at its airing that Cornyn broke the uncomfortable silence with a joke. “I hope you got a smile out of that video. My staff convinced me that it’d be a good idea. Maybe I need a new staff.”^{ccxxvii} The video, as well as the attendant Cornyn clip became fodder for The Daily Show and copious on-line commentaries. It also gave Rick Noriega’s campaign footage to work with in an attempt to shoot holes in Cornyn’s rhetoric, creating their own parodies of this parody.

Whether or not it was to be used as an actual campaign ad became irrelevant as the video was uploaded to youtube and went viral, by local standards, logging tens of thousands of hits. The video in question is a parody of the song ‘Big Bad John’ by Texan Jimmy Dean, notably covered by Country legend Johnny Cash. This text was re-written to suit the needs of this particular John: it lauded Cornyn’s past actions, his bold action in the Senate, Texan ways, and promises of re-election^{ccxxviii}.

The original is one of the country legend’s typical story-telling ballads done in Woody Guthrie’s talking blues style with a manly baritone narrating the story of a heroic

miner. The Big John of Dean and Cash's telling is an Atlas-like figure, strong, silent, mysterious, imposing and unconnected. He shows his humanity in his final gesture of saving twenty fellow miners by sacrificing himself, remembered by his grateful compatriots with a marble marker on the mine where he was buried, eulogizing him as 'One hell of a man.' Big John's heroism puts him in company with musically-immortalized folk legends John Henry (about whom Johnny Cash also sings), Slaid Cleaves' self-sacrificing logger Sandy Grey, and Texas-Mexico Border hero and David-type figure Gregorio Cortez. Big John embodies the attributes of these folk heroes – he is the physical specimen like Henry and Grey, has their similar work rate and like both of them, he dies in a dramatic and fearless self sacrifice that a lesser man would have been physically and ethically incapable of. But he also embodies an attribute of Cortez, that of being fundamentally dangerous, in this case with his bare hands. Big John inspires awe, fear, reverence and respect, even in death.

Along with the name, there is little doubt from the accompanying video that Cornyn's campaign also sought to capture the spirit of the original narrative of Big John. In the new narrative, 'Big' John Cornyn sacrifices for Texas by doing his time on the judicial benches of the Supreme Court and as the Attorney General. He defies Washington etiquette of politeness, bureaucracy, sloth and clandestine deals by stepping up as a junior senator and wielding Texas' power in the capitol. In dramatic fashion, he makes lesser states squirm, all the while keeping Texans in the loop, and enjoying beer. But unlike Big John, John Henry, or even Cortez, Cornyn's narrative is not over or even close to a grand finale, this narrative ends with a hagiography rather than a eulogy, it seeks to capture the heroic narrative in mid-stream.

Visually, the video has three main sources of moving footage of Cornyn: campaigning in cowboy regalia – a white ten-gallon hat and leather vest — mounted on a horse in what looks to be a period setting, and at a rally with his wife Sandy in ornate matching light brown suede jackets with fringe. In these montage shots he is alternately interacting with people or in a quasi-still shot looking regal (often mounted on a horse, at one point the camera focuses on a small US flag grasped along with the reins). The brief visual sections of Cornyn’s Washington life are still photos, one of him in a suit looking stern and another similar photo of him in a suit holding a microphone, both with the Capitol building in the background. Along with these foci on the senator, there are multiple short slow-motion clips of a small pack of horses running over grassland, a brief moment of the turbine of an old-style wind windmill, barbed wire, sunset over the plains, and a close-up of a saddle. Throughout the video, small pieces of the text appear, “John” (at each chorus’ *Big Bad John*); “Ya See I’m From Texas” (with the moving Texas flag in the background of a still of Cornyn in his suit with a microphone); “Opened Up Government” and “Gave Support To Our Troops” (over a still of Cornyn in a suit with the capitol in the background); “Another Man’s Turn?” over a close up of Cornyn looking serious and sunset over the plains in the background); “We’ll call Folks, Hustle, Out Work our Foe” (with horses running in the background); and finally, “John [three blue stars in a circle] Cornyn” over a weathered brown background.

Although the urban and cosmopolitan nature of country music, dating back to its first commercial recordings, is documented and theorized^{ccxxix} in the scholarly world, there remains a locality embedded within the performance and use of it. It is associated with the South, the rural, with imaginary ties to the land, nature, agriculture, labor, Christianity, and family^{ccxxx}. Country music, as deployed by George W. Bush in his

Presidential campaigns, can symbolize fierce loyalty to the locally felt and understood, even if the local is indeed an incredibly varied expanse larger than France. These associations apply to such monumental figures like Texan Jimmy Dean and especially to Johnny Cash who is an exemplar of both the genre and of the South in its many imaginary manifestations^{ccxxxix}. His stand-alone image of the ‘man in black’ who takes a stance on behalf of the common man, the forgotten and the marginalized, is an appealing image during this rebirth of populist rhetoric. This embodies the contradiction inherent in representative democracy between a class of elected officials and the populous at large: one radical individual standing in for a portion of the masses. Country’s rebel image (not all country, but so-called ‘outlaw’ country) also suits the needs of Cornyn’s imposed image as a man who bucked the Washington elite, citing his Texas roots as legitimating his resistance to standard procedure and submission of both the unstated rules and lesser states^{ccxxxix}. The text places Cornyn and Texas in a position of competition with other states and in opposition to the cultural practices of Washington, while maintaining the necessity of participation. In the final stanza, it also centers religion, in the form of ‘God’s Work for Texas’ as a descriptor of Cornyn’s path of action.

Through the sound, text and image, the ad portrays both the local and the national, picking and choosing points of contention and association. There is no mistaking the bland patriotism that has been a part of campaigning as long as I can remember: the waving of the US flag and the text ‘Support our Troops’^{ccxxxix}. However, the rest of the text and images are fiercely local: the Texas flag, the Pecos (a major river in West Texas), horses and windmills, the white cowboy hat^{ccxxxix}, the ornate fringe jacket, and the wide open space of the plains. There are also the common signifiers of masculinity: toughness and enjoying beer. The voice that narrates is a deeper, unmarked voice, more

like the action film movie voice in ads than the gravelly Johnny Cash, adding masculinity to the sound of the ad.

While politics generally speaking works on the broadest possible appeal, we can not forget that often these appeals come at the cost of intentionally alienating a disposable group, a necessary other. In the case of this race, the appeals are made to Texans with the necessary others being Washington, the often hated metonym, and what is not Texan by the ad's definition^{ccxxxv}. For the Cornyn campaign, open, unpopulated spaces, nature wild and free, rural life, cowboy regalia, God, enjoying beer and belligerent toughness are positive signifiers. They are the desired quality of a candidate, similar to the bumper-sticker motto 'God, Country, Texas'. They are also an interesting mix of the local and universal put into a selective interplay and appealing to the sentiments of Texans who consider themselves to have dual allegiances.

■

^{ccv} This chapter, more than any of the previous chapters, is folklore. As I have stated previously I am less concerned with absolute verity than my own honest portrayal of what was said to me and experienced by me. As a result, my citational work will be thin until the theoretical outline.

^{ccvi} From the Courthouse to the Statehouse was a typical rallying cry for the Texas Democrats. It was applied to their campaigns to get voters to vote 'straight ticket' which meant all Democratic, as well as to the realities that local government has a profound impact on the daily lives of voters, so each and every race is important.

^{ccvii} This group is significant because of the baggage they carried. Alberto Gonzalez was called to testify multiple times on the nature of US Military interrogations and the politicizing of the Department of Justice. Harriet Meyers was nominated for the Supreme Court to fill Sandra Day O'Connor's vacated seat, which she was, by many opinions, vastly under qualified for. Scott McClellan resigned as White House spokesman and went on to publish a virulent defense of himself and his role in selling the Iraq War to the US public, claiming that he had been lied to and given false information that he gave as truth to the public.

^{ccviii} According to one of the staffers at the Texas Democratic Party, issues like gun control, land and resource rights, energy policy and immigration were perpetual points of conflict between the National Democratic party and the Texas party.

^{ccix} Again, I borrow the phrase from Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 1991). In this case, there is no ur-politician and in most cases, the politicians who are emulated are emulated as a simulacrum – there is no original. The Lincoln of the Republican Party's pride never existed, but neither did the Kennedy of the Democrats, or the Reagan of the neo-conservative movement. They are copies for which there is no original (Baudrillard, 1994) but that are changed as the objects that become them draw closer. These becomings leave both the aim of the becoming and the subject altered. Thus, as citizens become politicians, both the once citizen and the politician are changed. We are especially aware of that now as people of

color, women and men from unconsidered backgrounds (like professional wrestling, rock, and television comedy) are winning political offices. The politician as an aspiration, aim and image is changing, but these 'outside' figures also *become* politician.

^{ccx} Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty" in *Reflections*, (1978).

^{ccxi} Taussig (1993) cites James Frazer's (1890) term 'sympathetic magic' in the case of mimesis. For Frazer, sympathetic magic meant that by performing a certain action that mimicked a phenomenon in the natural world, the corresponding action would take place. As examples he uses Cambodian fisherman swimming into their own nets to make fish do the same and Bechuanas warriors wearing a ferret, to make them tenacious and difficult to kill in battle. For Frazer, this sort of magic puts man on equal footing with the supernatural, allowing him to have the tools to control the natural world. With increased knowledge, this worldview is transformed into religion, which separates man from power over his surroundings, placing control in the hands of deities.

^{ccxii} In the course of the 2008 presidential campaign, many criticized John McCain for becoming more like the Christian Right than his former moniker, The Maverick. While there were many who offered theories on this change of course, chronicled in articles and op-eds over the course of his campaign, I will simply observe that this is a perfect case of political mimesis. John McCain was becoming presidential at a time when it was assumed by some that to be presidential one had to be a neo-conservative in the mold of George W. Bush, or better Ronald Reagan (although, I have stated above, the image of Reagan is a simulacrum). He mimicked the desires and actions that his campaign thought were essential to popular appeal.

^{ccxiii} Twitchell (2002) quotes early advertising mogul Bruce Barton saying 'Reputation is Repetition' and shows a magazine ad for the Wall Street Journal saying 'Some messages have to be repeated a few times before they sink in,' to prove his point on repetition (1996, 28-9).

^{ccxiv} The implications of my appropriation of Benjamin will be expanded upon in the following analyses. Without delving too far into this debate, I will classify advertising as a genre of art. According to Thomas Frank (1998), who chronicles the shift in advertising culture and production in the 1960s, this era marked a pervasive shift in advertising's self image. They began to consider themselves artists and not businessmen (still a male-dominated field at this point) and ran their businesses as boutique art houses, despite high-dollar contracts from booming auto, cigarette and soft-drink industries. James Twitchell (2002) also addresses these phenomena in modernity, opposing advertising to "high art" as the conveyor of culture and cultural literacy.

^{ccxv} In the epilogue to Benjamin's essay (1968), he spells out Fascism's aestheticization of politics, stating that communism's fight was to politicize art. Now, art is politicized as part of the political process, but in an uneven manner. As stated below, the ground of popular music was more contested this past year than ever before, with Mary Wilson of Hart and Jackson Browne both serving the McCain/Palin campaign with cease and desist orders for using 'Barracuda' and 'Running on Empty', respectively, without permission. This stands in contrast to "Born in the USA" being used by Ronald Reagan to Bruce Springsteen's dismay, but without legal action being taken.

^{ccxvi} Twitchell (2002, 28-29) notes the necessity of repetition to modern advertising, quoting early ad man Bruce Barton's mantra "Reputation is Repetition" from 1885.

^{ccxvii} See Weber, ed. Heydebrand (1994), pgs. 28-45. This is particularly evident in the recent cases of Barack Obama and George W. Bush, as well as the older case of John F. Kennedy, all of whom climbed the ranks of power thanks to charismatic personalities (as well as family name and money in the case of the latter two).

^{ccxviii} Frazer (1890), 31.

^{ccxix} Those who have used the internet effectively have more often than not used it to raise money. Notable users, besides Barack Obama, were Howard Dean, whose nickel and dime online fundraising set the current standard, Ron Paul, who raised record one-day amounts on the internet, as well as winning internet polling, and Bill Richardson, who was the first to release ads on the internet, thanks to youtube, before putting them on TV. All three not only lost their bids for candidacy, but were eliminated fairly early on. In a Gramscian mode, one can hypothesize that these candidates' outsider status to begin with drove the kind of creativity that was then appropriated by the big-name political players.

^{ccxx} There are an incredible number of strains, critiques and issues embedded in the scholarly use of this term, which extends backwards to Kantian critical theory. I openly acknowledge that there are many part to this term that I leave untouched – like the power dynamics, the specter of the new colonialism and the location of colored bodies in industrialized nations. What I hope to gain from using such a loaded word is the idea of ongoing struggles over multiple belongings – to locality, state, nation, world and hemisphere –

that are operative in state and national politics in the US. The rhetorical deployment of membership in any one of these sub-groups is what is of particular interest to me, and the tensions that are set up by actors who exist in multiple worlds. There is a great deal more that can be said of cosmopolitanism than I do here, and I hope to revisit this in relation to national politics, but with apologies, I use this term as a vehicle for my own ideas and leave a few major sources for a later date.

^{ccxxi} For an excellent summary of Cosmopolitanism see Sheldon Pollock, 2002.

^{ccxxii} Although Pollack does not cite linguist Sapir and Whorff, it is worth noting, in reference to an earlier note in this dissertation, that the ties between worldview and language are embedded in the cosmopolitan conflicts inherent in the spread of language.

^{ccxxiii} Also informative in this realm are the works of Homi Bhabha (2004), Arjun Appadurai (1996), James Clifford (1997) and Tusa (2006).

^{ccxxiv} For one example, see Erlmann's *Music, Modernity and The Global Imagination*, chapter one for an analysis of the necessity of the satellite in defining the metropol and vice versa.

^{ccxxv} It is worth noting, following Adorno's polemic lines in *Minima Moralia*, that 'The whole is the false' 1951, pg. 50.

^{ccxxvi} The context of which I refer is the overall social realities of the 2008 campaign: the ongoing wars with the attendant deficits, budget and trade, the housing bubble bursting, the economy crumbling, and growing concerns about unrest in the Middle East, Asia, the horn of Africa, and South America. This context lead to widespread disillusion among citizens of all ranks, leading to "change" becoming operative in many political contexts: Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, Greens, and Reformers.

^{ccxxvii} This quote was taken from a youtube.com clip of the Texas Republican Convention, reposted on the youtube Texans for John Cornyn channel, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0Tgs7xNt-8&feature=channel_page. Accessed on April 20th at 12:00 pm.

^{ccxxviii} See appendix for lyrics.

^{ccxxix} See Fox and Ching's (2008) *Old Roots, New Routes*, and Peterson's *Creating Country* for critical readings of country music's recourse to untouched pre-modernity.

^{ccxxx} Some of Johnny Cash's own comments on this topic are worth looking at. "When people...talk about being "country" they don't mean they know or even care about the land and the life it sustains and regulates. They're talking about... a way to look, a group to belong to, a kind of music to call their own. Which begs the question: is there anything behind the symbols of modern "country"...? Back in Arkansas, a way of life produced a certain kind of music. Does a certain kind of music now produce a certain way of life?" "I wonder how many of those people ever filled a cotton sack..." Quoted in Smith, 2008, p. 52.

^{ccxxxi} Two notes on this matter. First: Johnny Cash was among the many musicians who had public role in this election. According to Austin musician Jesse Dayton, in remarks made in between songs at a Democratic Gala, Johnny Cash's daughter reacted vehemently to public remarks made by a Tennessee politician that Johnny Cash would have voted for John McCain. She responded by taking out an ad in a Tennessee paper saying that her father was a lifelong Democrat and would have been appalled by the policies of the Republican candidate (made at Texas' Gala at the National Convention in Denver, August 2008).

^{ccxxxii} This supposed standard seems kind of odd, given that the then-contender and now president was a first-time senator, as was his democratic rival Hillary Clinton. Both of whom were high-profile active legislators in their first year in the Senate. Second: Johnny Cash's magnitude as a country figure served to make this song 'country'. Although country has many sounds, Big John deviates from most of the conventions. It is not weepy, twangy, a two-step or honky-tonk or rockabilly. In fact, the modal fiddle melody at the beginning of the Cornyn ad was added, it does not appear in the original.

^{ccxxxiii} I find it's interesting that here is a discrepancy between the printed text and the spoken text. The text refers to them as soldiers, but the text refers to the common slogan and rallying point 'Support our Troops'.

^{ccxxxiv} The white hat is also the classic signifier of the good guy in old westerns.

^{ccxxxv} The difference between Texas and Texan was theorized early on by Rousseau (1984) in *A Discourse on Inequality*, who regretted that patriotism applied more to the land within borders than to those who lived within those borders. More recently, Richard Flores' (2002) *Remembering the Alamo* deals with the symbol of the Alamo and the difference between the events and life of the building and the ways in which it has become a signifier of Texas history and lore.

Rick Noriega's campaign was quick to respond to this campaign snafu, releasing an internet video parody of 'Big John' entitled 'Dressing Up.' The minute and a half video takes Cornyn's ad and deconstructs some of the rhetoric, adding an oddly placed parody of the famous 'Priceless' Master Card ads, and finally a plug for Noriega. It begins with the same music and some of the scenes of Cornyn in his western wear with the subtitles "Have you seen John Cornyn dressing up as a cowboy? Let's look at the other ways he's pretending." After playing the first repetition of the deep-voiced narrator intoning 'Big Bad John,' there is a tape-stop sound and the text "'Bad' is right. He voted himself a pay raise but voted seven times against raising the minimum wage." This text, and the subsequent spinning of Cornyn's words are accompanied not by a Johnny Cash imitation, but by the electronica-eerie sounds of the X-files theme. After the verse concerning Cornyn's first year in the senate, ending with 'The way this place runs about to make me sick,' the screen flashes "The feeling is mutual. Apparently Cornyn is ranked as the 81st most effective Senator." After the next couplet, ending with 'rooted out crooks,' the text reads "That's a whopper. He voted against troops' body armor and to cut veterans benefits." The ad then abruptly cuts to the line 'is it another man's turn?' at which time the music changes to airy acoustic guitar flat-picking a delicate and earthy I-IV-V pattern and the text reads "Actually, yes. Rick Noriega will take on the health care crisis, and the rising cost of education." The video then moves into the Master Card parody, showing Cornyn on the horse with a pointer towards his bright white cowboy hat that says: Cowboy Hat: \$183. It then shows Cornyn and his wife in the back of convertible parade-style in their fringed jackets with a similar arrow reading: Fringe Jacket: \$199. At the bottom of the screen appears: Playing dress up in your own video? The screen then goes black with the dramatic white text: 'Unbelievable'. The video ends

with the innocuous acoustic guitar and the words: For a candidate who'll really be tall in the saddle for Texas, check out www.RickNoriega.com, and closes with the paid/support disclaimer. This parody logged far fewer hits than the object of its ridicule and failed to generate much in the way of media coverage.



Cornyn's media campaign started in earnest in the summer of 2008, when the senator returned from Washington. Over five months the Cornyn campaign would release two sets of ads, one on-line and one for television. The online ads featured Cornyn standing on the waterfront of the Gulf Coast, dressed casually and addressing the camera over the sound of whipping salt air, and in Sweetwater, TX in front of the large, modern windmills of a wind farm. These ads addressed the then-current energy crisis of high gas prices and the fight for off-shore drilling. The five ads were of unequal length, short messages ranging from slightly over 40 seconds to a minute and a half, and did not contain the campaign disclaimer, as they were simply posted on the campaign's website and youtube channel.

The second set, the campaign's television ads, was released in the fall of 2008 and were shot in dramatic black and white (with the exception of the final ad, released day before the election, which was in full color). They took place in storied landscapes like the cow pastures of Beeville, the Palo Duro Canyon, Gulf Coast, and sorghum fields of Nueces County in East Texas (each ad began with a small sub title telling the viewer the location). They are visually focused on Cornyn, but with voiceovers instead of direct address. These ads addressed a range of topics: energy, family, veterans, governmental ethics and economic growth. The final ad, released a week before elections breaks from this mold and is in color and has a casual and smiling Corny addressing the topic of

economic opportunity in the shade of a tree, on a ranch with cattle and horses behind him. Challenger Rick Noriega is not mentioned once in any of these ads.

The first set of ads, five in all, was posted on the web in July of 2008. The first three take place on Padre Island National Sea Shore and feature Cornyn, casually dressed in an un-tucked chambray shirt, jeans and sunglasses addressing the camera on issues of energy independence, particularly offshore drilling. He unceremoniously addresses the camera and the audience with the waves breaking in the background and the sound of the sea breeze tickling his clip-on microphone. The short talks are loosely scripted and give the feeling that the Cornyn knew what he wanted to say but was still improvising, making a few grammatical errors here and there (like referring to Hugo Chavez as a dangerous place where our money goes for in exchange for oil) and at times being repetitive and unclear. He frequently mentions energy independence, at one point referencing Newt Gingrich's 'Drill Here, Drill Now' plan, and insists that buying foreign oil supports Venezuela's Hugo Chavez in each clip. He also mentions OPEC and money being sent to the Middle East in other clips, but Chavez appears by name in all of them.

The second two clips are shot in Sweetwater, Texas, which Cornyn reminds us is in Nolan County (in the Western plains of Texas). He stands alone at the foot of a large, modern windmill with other windmills in the background. The grass around him is wild and unkempt. While most of the sound is again Cornyn and the wind, in the background there appears to be a game of sorts, with the periodic sound of cheering bleeding through, setting a rather odd atmosphere. In the first clip he talks about the US's energy future, clean fuel and nuclear fuel, and avoiding sending money to our enemies, Ahmadinejad in Iran and Chavez in Venezuela. In the second, he takes nearly a full minute to criticize the US Congress for hampering energy progress. He accuses their over regulation in energy

affairs for impeding the inevitable progress of ‘good old American ingenuity’ which would solve the energy crisis if given free reign.

There are a number of notable features of this ad campaign. First is the rhetoric of these ads is the US versus them – the US versus our enemies in the Middle East and South America. There is both the necessity of freeing ourselves from these hostile countries and their leaders, and the necessity of innovation, which is latent in the being of the American people (the phrase ‘American ingenuity’ having been from damage control over McCain’s notorious snafu concerning the fundamentals of the US economy). Second is that without saying as much directly, Cornyn also addresses Texas as a potential leader in setting the tone for domestic energy production. He talks about Texas as the US’ energy capital, its history of off-shore drilling and innovative methods of extraction fuels from the Barnett shale in North Texas. He also gives a picture of new energy in Texas by not only talking about Sweetwater but visiting it and making it the centerpiece of two of the shoots. Finally, he name drops places in Texas, giving a local flair to the topic of energy by placing it firmly in Texas’ physical landscape, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Plains.

While the topic of energy is inevitably cosmopolitan, involving all corners of the earth and every nation on it, Cornyn’s campaign spins the issue as one first of locality, then of nationality and internationality. On the local level, Texas is a producer and a consumer and Cornyn does not dance around the need for fuel. Texas also has experience in offshore and inland drilling that can lead the way for domestic production, helping the nation to free itself from dependence on the foreign, in all of its xenophobic connotations. The ingenuity needed is the property of the nation, in between the local and international,

not the enemy, but part of those who can be pedagogized by what Texas has to offer. The role of Texas in this arduous future is both assured and a necessity for the future.

In these ads, spoken text and scene are the prime focus, with atmospheric sound playing almost no extraordinary role, even in the shoreline set. There appear to be no digitally added sounds, and the few intrusions by hidden non-participants are not intentional and perhaps were kept for effect or necessity. The direct message of the speaker is the focus of the ads and they address a contemporary issue that at the time was affecting everyone: high gas prices. Perhaps this is what necessitated the ‘straight talk’ vibe of these five ads^{ccxxxvi}.

The Cornyn campaign’s second set of ads were professionally produced, done in black and white, and aired on television as well as on the internet. This group contained ten ads, nine in black and white with a definite aesthetic theme, and one final ad, done a week before the election, in color. All of these ads were shot outdoors, or were composed of outdoor pictures and dealt predominantly with current political concerns, and only obliquely with Cornyn’s own personal background. These ads were 30-seconds in length, with one major exception: the ad concerning the military and veterans care was a minute and a half. With no exceptions, all of the ads use the same or similar music: acoustic versions of the folk song “Red River Valley”^{ccxxxvii} some versions performed on solo acoustic guitar, others with acoustic guitar and fiddle. The veterans ad, the longest of the group, features the tune in both forms, which will be discussed in detail below. With the exceptions of Cornyn’s post-Hurricane Ike public service ad, and his final ad, there is no direct address. The sound consists of Cornyn’s voice-over and the acoustic mood music (and the brief campaign disclaimer ‘paid for by...’ done by a deep male voice).

Rhetorically, these ads contain criticism of Washington's governmental practices and laud Texas' values, saying that they are needed in Washington. The ads also address Cornyn's record on hot-button issues like energy and taxes, mostly by stating his record in print on the screen, while Cornyn's voice over addresses the more affective elements: belief, conviction and vision. The rhetoric seeks to define who Texans are and what they believe and desire for the future. Cornyn makes bold statements like "Texans are Optimists", "In Texas, we believe in hard work, straight talk, strong families and the dignity of every human life. We follow the rules, keep our country strong," "We're Texans, we help one another." He also makes reference to Texas common sense when talking about solving governmental problems and about higher taxes hurting Texas families. When expressing frustration with the backdoor dealings of Washington and the need to open up government, he refers to it as bringing 'Texas sunshine' to Washington.

Cornyn's rhetoric seeks to set up a set of desirable values, like efficiency, transparency, access to education and resources, a strong nation, strong families and the success of children as conservative, Texas values. Rhetorically he is placed within this value network through his voiceovers about what he believes or his vision for government and by the text that appears on the screen, like "a lifetime of conservative values" and "voted 'Friend of the Taxpayer'". These values that are defined through belief or action then figure into Washington culture – one that needs to be fixed, and can be by taking on Texas values or learning from Texas ways, like renewable energy and exploitation of resources. These values and beliefs that Cornyn embodies are both the property of Texans and innate in Texas, Cornyn is set up as more of a conduit for these local values than one who enacts them through personal agency. He is the recipient of Texas' (and Texans') own sympathetic magic.

Visually, the ads are stunning. They are picturesque, eloquently shot and make aesthetic use of close-ups of Cornyn's face, booted feet and hats (both black and white ten-gallon hats, and a camouflaged hunting cap), and wide-angle shots of Texas' natural beauty. Along with natural beauty they also feature Black Angus cattle, the Alamo, the giant windmills of Sweetwater, and still photographs of the destruction of Gulf storms and relief efforts. For most of this, Cornyn is alone, contemplating his surroundings while his disembodied voice offers the pitch. This magically creates dual Cornyns: one is the Texan, in the landscape, in the local; the other is Cornyn the Senator with insight into the workings and faults of Washington, the resume and the power to enact these changes (following McCain's critique of the 'change from outside' rhetoric).

Sonically, the music does two things, one negative and one positive. For the former, it doesn't step on the narrative. Music and advertising research has shown that lyrically dense music tends to mute or distort the memory of the message, making it impractical for text-heavy advertisement, as these ads were^{ccxxxviii}. This pleasing rendition of the well-known cowboy song is played at a moderate volume, high enough to jar the memory into recognition, but the acoustic instruments do not interfere with the voice or the text, allowing for concentration and unimpeded listening. On the positive side, it augments the visual, referencing Texas, the Red River, and the cowboy. The latter symbol is even more powerful as Cornyn appears with cattle, walking Palo Duro in cowboy boots, and with his black ten-gallon hat underneath the windmills of West Texas. The music reinforces the local by not being just airy acoustic muzak, it is identifiable and works in careful synergy with the themes of the messages.



One of these ads deserves special consideration because of its longer length, specific topic and different form. This is an ad labeled as ‘Veterans’ on the campaign website, is shot in black and white, but contains direct address to the camera, mostly by military vets, with one section of Cornyn addressing not the camera, but one of the vets who is giving him a testimonial. The ad begins with a man who self-identifies as former F-16 pilot Scott O’Grady, who was shot down over Bosnia and survived six days behind enemy lines before being rescued, endorsing Cornyn. In his short monologue, he insists that no matter what the viewer has heard, Cornyn is a strong supporter of the military and military families. The video then takes an odd turn to footage of Cornyn walking below the windmills of Sweetwater, in the same outfit as the alternative energy ad, with the texts ‘Grew up in a military family,’ ‘Member, Armed Services Committee’ and ‘Supported bipartisan expansion of the GI Bill.’

It then shows Cornyn talking to O’Grady, with the camera as a casual observer. Corny talks about the Armed Services as a volunteer profession and how military families also play a part in service to the country. He mentions that he knows this because he comes from a military family himself. It then goes on to show him standing alone in a field as the texts “Eliminated the ‘Widow Tax’,” “Increased benefits for military families,” and “Helped increase VA healthcare by nearly two thirds,” appear on the screen. The music, a fiddle and guitar rendition of ‘Red River Valley,’ then comes to a resolved halt.

In silence, the camera cuts to an older black gentleman in an ARMY t-shirt. “I was in the army and I know he’s great for vets,” the man says matter of factly. The music then begins with a different and more upbeat rendering of the tune as the camera swirls around Cornyn looking down on the Palo Duro Canyon, in the same outfit as another ad

from the same black and white run. The on-screen text reads ‘Co-Sponsored bill improving mental health care for Veterans.’ Two men, one older and in uniform and one younger in a polo shirt, then appear in the foreground, with Cornyn and the canyon still in the background. The older one simply says “John Cornyn has always been a friend of the veteran,” and the commercial ends.

This ad is unique in that it offers different rhetoric than the other nine in the series. It makes no mention of Texas, Washington, or values. It is specifically centered on veterans and military families in a very pointed way. It also does not have a voice over, all of the voices are diegetical, using direct address to the camera/viewer. Cornyn’s own idea, that military families serve the US too, is stated not to the viewer but directly to a young man who self-identifies as a veteran. It also cites direct policy involvement, with the exception of the text about being from a military family, instead of espoused values and stances. Sonically and visually, this ad is neatly divided into two sections. The first takes place on the plains and is accompanied by a very modal interpretation of ‘Red River Valley’ by acoustic guitar and fiddle. The second takes place at the Palo Duro Canyon and is accompanied by an upbeat, tonal rendering of the same melody.

Splitting an ad in this manor (one block of 57 seconds and one of 22) certainly begs an interpretation that is also split. The first section is ultimately serious, it begins with a narrative of military distress and hardship, certainly in resonance with the much more dramatic narrative of then-candidate John McCain. The stating of tangible policy involvement, exemplified by words like ‘eliminated’ and statistics like ‘two-thirds’ strike a note of gravity. The music, through its modality and slower tempo, has the air of loneliness and loss that the images of Cornyn standing alone on the plains feeds into. In contrast to this, the tonal rendering of the second section make the shots of Cornyn at the

Palo Duro Canyon seem heroic, coupled with the plain statements that Cornyn is good for vets. The one curious factor that stands out, as I watch this repeatedly, is the silence in which the one notable spokesman of color is framed. His words are spare and to the point, he does not have a grand narrative the way that O'Grady does, and visually he is part of the scenery rather than being the sole focus of the camera, as O'Grady was. It is a rather curious and abrupt transition into the more upbeat section of the ad.

I can only speculate that this ad is different from the others because of the nature of Cornyn's challenger, a decorated vet who has made veteran's affairs a cornerstone of his policy for over a decade. In terms of identity politics, Cornyn is at a partial loss, as Noriega is an active serviceman who has served in the Middle East on more than one occasion and Cornyn's connection to the military is as the son of a man who was an Air Force dentist. In this particular battle, material connection to vets (a hot button topic in the competition to be patriotic in these times of unpopular wars) in the form of their presence and voices and concrete policy action was perhaps preferable to disembodied voiceovers with visions for the future.



It is difficult to draw lasting conclusions about Cornyn's campaign other than the fact that it handily won him re-election. His victory, coupled with his party's losses, the impending departure of Texas' senior Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson in 2010, and a looming Republican identity crisis, have given him a sense of vigor and profile, and he is often quoted publicly as a spokesperson for the party. Indeed, he may be embodying the one-man island image that was chosen for his advertisements. Apart from the initial video, his campaign stayed away from parody of all types, perhaps a testament to the power position he possessed as the incumbent from a 'red' state with a good-sized war

chest and access to wealthy donors. His mimetic actions revolved around the local, with the exception of the ad concerning veterans, which is an essentially nationalistic concern. He mimicked the cattleman with his dress, from hat to boots, strolling among the unconcerned beasts as they grazed. He stood tall on the plains and on the shoreline. He became insider and outsider as he extolled Texans and Texas and criticized Washington and enemies abroad. He walked a fine line between being local in image, universal in ethical appeal, national in vision, and both local and national in association with people and places. In some ways, this was a cosmopolitan campaign in that it played on the local, the national and the international (albeit in confrontation form). It was, however, blank to trans-national concerns of the Texas border, a major issue, and reticent on the issue of immigration and Cornyn's own record on relations with NAFTA and Mexican-American initiatives. For Cornyn's campaign, effective campaign affect lives at home and is carried to Washington, or at least that's how I got the spin.



Rick Noriega's ad campaign had all of the trappings of a self-conscious underdog: it was low-budget, revolved around on-line ads, and responded directly to Cornyn's campaign and senate record. The Noriega campaign had a clear target which they pursued with vigor, working to expose inconsistencies in his rhetoric and a voting record that hurt Texans. With a few exceptions, the tone of the campaign was oppositional, framing Noriega's policies and values in the negative. They also appropriated images of Cornyn's ads, using clips from the infamous 'Big John' video as well as shots from Cornyn's black and white summer ad campaign. If Noriega's 'Messages,' on-line addresses concerning specific issues or current events, are included with his on-line and television ads, his

campaign numbers fifteen ads total, sixteen if you include one Spanish-language version of his first ad entitled “Ready to Serve.”

The three addresses, labeled “FISA,” “Healthcare,” and “Early Voting”, were responses to issues brewing in Washington that had received national attention, or the impending election, respectively. FISA, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, was under tight scrutiny in the spring and summer of 2008. Congress was debating amendments to the bill as well as considering immunity or criminal prosecution for the telecom companies who participated in warrant-less wire tapping at the behest of the government. This was a hotly contested issue that many weighted in on. In his message, Noriega tells a story about traveling to an outpost with an internet connection in Afghanistan on Christmas day to call his family where they were nearly ambushed^{ccxxxix}. He talks about calling his wife who recognized by the tone in his voice that he was under stress. He talks about how his conversation with his wife was probably monitored because it was an international communication, and that it is a violation of the Constitution for which he was fighting. The monologue then turns to the conflict between special interests, who are funding Cornyn’s campaign, and the Constitution’s principles, which were at stake in the wrangling over immunity. He ends by asking which is more important, saying that Cornyn’s upcoming vote in the FISA proceedings will indicate which is more important.

The message entitled “Healthcare” is more or less the same format, this time surrounding the fight to increase the income ceiling for enrollment in ChIP, a national children’s insurance initiative, which was vetoed by Bush multiple times. Released in July 2008, it featured two parts, one with a black screen and white text, set to Strauss’ “Blue Danube Waltz”, and a second with Noriega on the street in Washington talking

about how politicians go there to vote against healthcare for families, seniors, disabled and veterans. The two halves are separated by a common web clip of a gymnastic vaulter springing himself into the horse and collapsing in great pain. The combination of the music, which has a long history of use with ‘bloopers’ videos and cartoons, and the vaulter clip give a distinctively comic air to the ad even though it concerns a topic of great importance for many nationwide. These two messages contain the main talking points that Noriega would visit over and over again: that Cornyn was beholden to special interests, that he had repeatedly voted against the interests of Texas families, children and veterans, and that he had rubber stamped a Bush agenda that had raised the cost of living and damaged the environment without creating jobs. Noriega’s campaign sought, throughout the campaign, to paint Cornyn as out of touch with Texans and connected, if not beholden, to the big-dollar contributing special interests of Washington.

The third message was a monologue by Noriega that accompanied video and pictures. The story was about a group of Afghan soldiers that Noriega trained going on their first mission: protecting polling sites in the Kandahar. There were pictures and footage from that day of the Afghan soldier in training, some photos of Noriega working with them, and of men, women and children waiting on lines to vote. He emphasizes the facts that this was the first free election in the Afghanistan’s history, that it was the first in which women were allowed to vote, and that some of the women showed up in burkahs and with children and waited on line for hours to exercise their rights. The voiceover then shifts to the looming elections, reminding the viewer of the importance of the vote. This particular message stands out because it is blatantly international in scope, we as US citizens are being reminded of the importance of the vote by nameless (and faceless in burkahs) Afghans who are embracing a right that we take for granted. In a

play of mirrors, they are reminding us of the importance of a right that was the public rational for our invasion of both Afghanistan and Iraq.



The Noriega campaign's television ads were slightly smaller in number than Cornyn's amounting to only eight ads (nine if you count the Spanish-language version of his first ad, 'Ready to Serve'). With the exception of the first one, which introduced Noriega's back story, all of the ads directly addressed Cornyn, sometimes using clips from his ads or his visage. The text of the ads accused Cornyn of being about the status quo, selling out to Big Oil and financial interests while Texans suffered financially. Unlike Cornyn's ad campaign, Noriega's featured the candidate directly addressing the camera, talking about the ways that he is 'fed up' with Washington and the reign of special interest groups. He ends each of the ads with 'I approve this message...' and then adds a tag like 'because I'll represent *you* in Washington.' Through strong, direct language and pointed rhetoric that is hard to deny – gas and fuel prices were higher, as was the cost of insurance, health care and tuition – Noriega sought to connect himself with the financial needs of Texans and to assure them that if he were to be elected, he would, as his first ad noted, serve them. He repeatedly said "I'll be *your* senator," to both the camera and to small groups of supporters who were staged into his ads.

Sonically, these ads were fairly generic and predictable. They featured the candidate speaking directly to the camera, sometimes voiced over, or a smooth combination of the two, unobtrusive mood music, and occasional voiceovers by bland male voices that set up the entrance of Noriega's voice. The structure of the music fell into two categories, either it was consistent through the ad, or it was a split. The split was always ominous to up beat, matching a text that moved from Cornyn's failures to

Noriega's promise. Noriega's voice was never set over ominous music. All of the music was clearly canned, the sort of stuff that usually accompanies television commercials. There were no strong melodies, little tonal movement and nothing particularly memorable texturally – a bland mix of acoustic guitar, percussion and synthesizer. It was safe and typical, and mostly forgettable.

One ad stands out from the others for its length (a minute and fifteen seconds, the longest of Noriega's ads) and form, it is Noriega's veterans ad. In this ad, vets from Texas, identified by subtitles that state their name and one fact from their military history (where they served, their rank, the number of year that they served, etc.) talking about veterans and the GI Bill. The ad was released to promote a petition, floated by Noriega's campaign, to put pressure on Cornyn to pass the new GI Bill. The vets criticized Cornyn, saying that Cornyn thought that increasing benefits would weaken America. In between the short clips, appear two texts: 'They Fought For Our Freedom'; and 'Let's Fight For Their Rights'. These statements appear over a CGI background of a "Veteran" uniform patch and a Purple Heart. After 40 seconds of testimonials, Noriega appears, saying that Cornyn is wrong and that he needs to give Texas vets the benefits that they have been promised. Behind it all is a growing swell of film score-type patriotic music with strings, cymbal swells and French horns, which builds to the end and peaks at then end of the ad when the web address for Noriega's petition is on the screen^{ccxl}.

However, Noriega's online campaign was much more aggressive, humorous and biting. In three ads aired on the internet, Cornyn and his ads are parodied to humorous music and images. They are labeled "Dress Up," "All By Himself," and "Follow the Herd." "Dress up" begins with a two picture from Cornyn's ads – one of him in a camouflage hunting cap and one in his ornate fringed jacket – with the words 'A John

Cornyn Halloween’ in orange above the pictures. Children’s voices say ‘Happy Halloween’ as the ad begins. Over comical synthesized two-beat music (think the physical comedy sketch on Sesame Street with a synth tuba playing a I-IV-V-type two-beat, and a trumpet playing a staccato melody that ends with a chromatic tumble to the root) the narrator remarks on how Cornyn can dress up but he can’t hide his record. As the voiceover tells what Cornyn voted against – healthcare for seniors, children and vets, green energy – and his involvement with convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff, a quasi-Cornyn model is shown in front of a mirror trying on outfits. These outfits are that of a doctor, soldier, linesman and jailbird, respectively. At the final remark, “Even a wizard couldn’t hide that record” the man dons a wizard cape and zaps the camera. When the smoke clears, the music turns upbeat and Rick Noriega appears, giving his pitch.

“All by Himself” begins with the Eric Carmen’s power pop ballad ‘All by Myself’ sung by Celine Deion. Over a black screen, which text appears: John Cornyn is searching the entire state of Texas to find a single family that has been helped by Big John’s special interest politics. The music abruptly stops and the screen switches to a video still from a Cornyn ad of him standing alone looking down over the Palo Duro Canyon with the sound of crickets in the background. It then goes back to the pop song and black screen with: No luck yet? Keep looking Big John. The music fades and Noriega’s campaign logo and disclaimer appear.

The last of the three ads has a steady sound track of the Jack Guthrie Texas Swing classic “I Loved You Once, But I Can’t Trust You Now.” The first text reads: After taking \$4 million from Wall Street and letting special interests get us into this mess, it’s clear John Cornyn just follows the herd. The visual then cuts to a segment of Cornyn’s ad where he strolls through the cow pasture in Beeville. After a few seconds it cuts back to

the black screen with the words: Maybe that's why his claim of change is just bull. After a few more seconds of the Cornyn ad, the words pop up: Watch your step, Big John! The ad then cuts to the Noriega logo and disclaimer in silence.



Noriega's add campaign showed a diversity of approaches to the promotion of a candidate and focused on an interpretation of the issues at hand and their material affects on Texans – vets, children and families. He incorporated the international in the form of his own story of overseas involvement and that of generations of Texas vets who have performed service abroad. The campaign, like most in 2008, critiqued the special interests, mostly financial and energy-related, who were widely blamed for the recession that was just blooming at the time. They also focused on the incumbent, mentioning him by name in every ad, using his picture and clips from his own ads to show contradictions and to challenge his rhetoric. Through it all, the campaign attempted to show genuine concern for the perceived needs of Texans and those that they cared about.



It is difficult to draw any conclusions about the styles and differences of ad campaigns and their effect on the outcome of the race. Cornyn was the Republican incumbent in a very 'red' state with a much larger campaign budget and state-wide news coverage due to the tumultuous happenings at the time of the campaign. He was able to make very slick ads and effectively brand himself through consistency of style. The ads were recognizable enough that Noriega's campaign used them in parody. Although Noriega was able to raise money, his campaign, in the words of a Democratic Party Staffer, 'was not ready for the big time,' and made many mistakes along the way. His

public appearances lacked any spark and he was often unable to cultivate and maintain enthusiasm. His campaign was also overlooked the networks that are hubbed or generated in Austin and instead spent time working to build networks in the Valley and West Texas^{ccxli}.

What can be said about the key differences between these two campaigns is that there were key propositional differences in the presentation of the candidate. John Cornyn was presented as being *from* Texas, Noriega *for* Texas^{ccxlii}. Cornyn dressed in a mimetic parody of Texas masculinity, with a ten-gallon hat, vest, boots, and fringed jacket. He was filmed nonchalantly strolling with black angus cattle, standing alone atop the Palo Duro Canyon, in sorghum fields dressed in hunting attire, on the shores of the Gulf Coast, and humbly at the foot of Sweetwater's giant windmills. Although he back story was only mentioned briefly in his ad concerning veterans, and only in a fleeting reference to why he believes that military families also serve their country – a belief that serves his own images as much as his constituency. The spin of Cornyn was most definitely local – he was from Texas, he knew Texan ways, and he was determined to forcibly carry these ways to Washington, which would prove to be an inevitable improvement over the current ways. Ideas were framed as being *from* Texas and traveling *to* Washington *through* Cornyn. Even as he asked the Texas voters to send him back to Washington, he was *becoming* local. By oppositional force, he made Washington and certain foreign powers the enemy, drawing a hard line between us and them.

By contrast, Rick Noriega was *for* Texas, even though his ads were more focused on Texans than on Texas^{ccxliii}. He advocated for a change in Washington against special interests and, Cornyn and *for* Texans, but he framed it differently. His campaign framed his ideas as benefiting Texas families, seniors, vets and consumers. The ad campaign

dwelt on the hardships being faced, the ways that Cornyn had failed to ease the suffering (speculating that he was beholden to their contributions) and how Noriega would advocate differently in Washington. Instead of being local – Noriega’s Texas back story was rarely mentioned — the ads pitched his international experiences in the Middle East. They frequently showed him in his uniform (a national symbol), referenced his service and overseas experience and rarely dealt with his experience in the Texas legislature, or his ordinary life working on behalf of the people of his district. Noriega’s spin was unplaced: he was looking after the needs of Texans but from the place of the unmoored underdog. He was never able to plant his feet in one place and throw a punch, but rather depended on the missteps of his opponent for his offense to be generated through parody. It was clear that he did not like Washington ways, but not that he was grounded in Texas, rather it seemed as though his pedagogy came from the Middle East. Noriega was trying to become politician through being cosmopolitan, Texan by birth but a citizen of the world, honed in the open fields and harsh cities of far away but important places.



As this chapter is being written, Cornyn and Noriega are pursuing their own ends. Cornyn has taken as outspoken position in the senate, vocally questioning President Obama’s nominations, especially those of Timotheer Geitner and Hillary Clinton, as well as Obama’s fiscal policies. He stands poised to become Texas’ senior senator with the impending departure of Kay Bailey Hutchinson in 2010 and to be a stalwart of conservative Christian Republicans as the party re-tools behind closed doors. Meanwhile, Noriega declined an offer from the Obama administration for a position in the Department of Veteran’s Affairs and in back in session with the Texas Legislature advocating for veteran’s benefits, freezing college tuition and economic recovery.

^{ccxxxvi} Even in the ad which used Newt Gingrich’s ‘Drill Here, Drill Now, Pay Less’ movement as a starting point, there was no direction to a website or contact info where citizens could sign up to join the movement. Also, while Cornyn repeated that his campaign would like to hear from citizens, he never gave a phone number, email address or website.

^{ccxxxvii} Red River Valley is a common folk/cowboy song, which is easily recognizable. It is a basic diatonic melody which can be rendered with I-V-V chords or with more complex secondary dominance and passages into minor tonalities. According to Edith Fowke (“The Red River Valley’ Re-Examined”, *Western Folklore* (1964): 163-171), there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that this song is about the Red River in the upper Midwest and Canada. However, two prominent Texas cowboy singers, Carl Sprague and Jules

Verne Allen, recorded it in the 1920s, giving it a Texas association, partly because there is a Red River in Texas, which serves as the border between Texas and Oklahoma.

^{ccxxxviii} Bader, 2005.

^{ccxxxix} The reference to the ambush in this story is not clear at all, and is one example of many of a lack of clarity and precision in the Noriega Campaign.

^{ccxi} While the actual music is clearly different, it is strikingly similar to the patriotic-type music used in Jim Gilmore's ad, discussed in chapter 4.

^{ccxli} Were this a policy paper and not an ethnomusicology paper, this would be greatly expanded upon, as I was privy to a lot of the frustrations of Democratic activists at Noriega's missteps.

^{ccxlii} Noriega's campaign was initially called 'Noriega for Texas' which is the name on the youtube channel and was the phone greeting at the office through the Democratic primary when it was changed to 'Noriega for Senate.'

^{ccxliii} This subtle but important distinction, mentioned in Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* as one of the great faults of patriotism and is theorized by Foucault's work on the transformation of government from the management of land and borders to the management of people and ultimately to the management of the economy. As insightful as the theories of these two philosophers are, and others who followed in the broad critiques of the nation and nationalism, it seems that the affective weight of association tends to lie in the abstract – the nation as land between imaginary lines with an imagined set of shared associations, symbols and values – rather than with the material and lived experiences of the people who live within those lines. Indeed, as cosmopolitan issues are artificially resolved into the hierarchy nation-state as Kant theorized (cited in Derrida, Appiah and Pollack), the reality of the power of imaginary nation with its attendant trappings looms large.

Presidential Pop

On the evening of Feb 9th, I was in a car slowly winding its way through the labyrinth of a parking garage, spiraling and weaving down in search of a space. The radio was tuned to a pop station and the Kings of Leon's break-out single 'Sex on Fire', an innocuous, catchy pop tune was playing. Suddenly, the interference from the large concrete structure caused station crossover, presenting us with the opening words of new President Barack Obama's first State of the Union address. The cutbacks continued and lasted about ten or twelve seconds. What struck me as odd about this was that this seemed *normal*. The interspersions of popular music and the commanding voice of the President, rendered so often by fans on sites like youtube in mash-up style, have become commonplace, part of the new face of US politics. Yes, it was a little unsettling to have the song accompanying the president be 'Sex on Fire', but the fact that his persuasive, dark and cautious words can through some cultural logic be seamlessly spliced in with a mid-tempo, four-on-the-floor beat and up-strummed guitar signals a real change in my own perception, in the perception of others, and in politics.

At the risk of seeming prone to profundity, popular music in politics is nothing short of common. Songsters were employed by pre-radio candidates to pen favorable ditties about the political deeds and promises of their chosen candidate. Kennedy's campaign was accompanied by the crooning of Frank Sinatra in a modified version of 'High Hopes,' and Nixon's attack ads that featured the scenes of chaos at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago were accompanied by 'Hot Times in old Town.' More recently, Bill Clinton both used popular music as a theme, utilizing Fleetwood

Mac's baby-boomer pleasing "Don't Stop" as a campaign song and motto as well as appearing on then-late show mogul Arsenio Hall's show clad in Blues-Brother-esque sunglasses and playing the saxophone. The list of instances where popular music has been deployed, and arguable misused, in a presidential campaign is long. However, I can't help but feel that this time it's different.

Maybe it's different because it's demanded, an additional dimension of an expanding repertoire, part of the new and emerging cultural practice of the campaign. Television changed the nature of the campaign through debates, ads, commentary shows, talking heads and opinion makers. Politics used television and radio to borrow from the celebrity system, to make larger-than-life icons of politicians. Now, the internet and desktop software is again changing the sight and sound of the election. The internet generations are melding their own tastes for popular culture and malleable media into a stipulation. Just as candidates must now publicly address their patriotism and faith, they must also proclaim their affiliations with popular music and be eminently splicable with the sounds of forgettable pop tunes.

Sure, it would seem antithetical to have Bob Dole, John McCain or Michael Dukakis surrounded by the sounds of the Kings of Leon, Jay-Z or Jimmy Vaughn, but maybe that's just the point. Candidates like that may become anachronistic, a relic of a time when old grey-haired white men ruled supreme. But that does not preclude all old men, as there were a few adept at utilizing popular music, like outsider Republican candidate Ron Paul who attracted and utilized the support of Texas roots-rocker Jimmy Vaughn and Los Angeles thrasher Serj Tankian. There was also Chris Dodd, the self-described only man who received both AARP mail and ads for diapers (he is a late-in-life

parent), who campaigned with equally aged musician friend Paul Simon. Not exactly the hippest combination out there, but certainly in keeping with the trend of melding politics and pop. And of course, Bill Clinton was perhaps the youngest, hippest grey-haired white man to hold the highest office, let alone to be haphazardly and erroneously labeled as the nation's first Black president.

While a candidate's ability to morph while leaving no trail has long been a quietly admired quality, perhaps now the ability to be re-mixed with popular culture will become one of those presidential intangibles. Since the campaign has taken to the internet, every shred of footage becomes public domain, able to be tapped into as a raw resource for fan and foe alike. Beyond the comic stylings of Jib-Jab and Barely Political, there is a widening space of interaction where so-called 'Main Street' molds their candidate with a full dose of pop culture: cutting and splicing, and creating a visual and sonic atmosphere of resonant sound-images. The new electability standard may have more to do with resonance with popular culture than it does attachment with long-held political ideologies and illusions as modernity places identity on the melting icebergs of yesterday.



Jim Dunham, leader of the Democratic Caucus in the Texas House of Representatives, has a band called The Bad Precedents. It's made up of elected officials and staffers and while the legislature is in session they play a fundraiser a month, usually at Scholtz's Beer Garden in downtown Austin. I would characterize the band as a mediocre KLBJ cover band. You can definitely identify the tunes, they start and end

every tune together, and there are more right notes than wrong ones. However, they drop beats like a bad habit, have tempo fluctuation issues, and miss the high notes often enough to ask why they even bother trying to hit them. But all that aside, their fundraisers are a lot of fun, filled with beer, barbeque, some political speeches, some networking, and good laughs all around.

The evening of October 11th was no different. The band had come back to Austin to raise money for candidacies that were just beginning to gather steam. When I arrived after work, the Beer Garden was full, beer was in every hand and barbeque on every plate. The Bad Precedents were moving full steam ahead, covering The Romantics' *What I Like About You*, Neil Young's *Rockin' in the Free World* and Ted Nugent's *Stranglehold*. Dunham then invited up Rep. Juan Garcia from Corpus Christi to play guitar on *Johnny B. Goode* and *Wipe Out*, and Rep. and Senate hopeful Rick Noriega to do the War classic *Lowrider*. They concluded their first set with Bob Dylan's classic *The Times They Are A-Changin*. After which one of the guitar players took to the mic confidently intoning, *Let it be know that Democrats got mo' groove*, as the band cleared the stage to take a break. It does seem that having 'mo groove' is becoming a legitimate pitch or elected office. Hipness is a factor in the race for office, the competition for cash donations, and in the most important spin room – the space of fan-made propaganda, which always had dreams of going viral.

Is it any wonder that hipness is so often defined by association with music culture? Even the term used – *mo' groove* – speaks to an embodied closeness to music of a certain ilk. It's not a proclamation of having mo' morals, mo' family values, mo' faith or mo' knowledge, but it's not that far away either. In the body that moves to the groove,

that has an aesthetic of visceral hot and cool, there are the seeds of morality, love, faith and knowledge. In dancing or in chillin' out at the spot grow the seeds of ethical association, or at least the idea of that association. In the feeling of shared and common culture, even if that culture is an uneven mixture of liveness and mechanical reproduction and vastly different meanings and interpretations in public and private, there is a powerful sense of communion, of being in it together. This shared sense is displayed in the shared consumption of music, and the free appropriation of music for political means. And the *feeling* of being together is the affect of Democracy.

A Conclusion?

There is no real end to this, as there is no true narrative, no driving question, just ideas on a map of how politics sound in a time of intense and historic public activity. This work is not meant to have a conclusion, but to be open, to put ideas into the fray, to get one step closer to the illusive beast called thinking; thinking about politics, sound, affect, failure, feeling, sensation, location and ethnography to be more specific. There is, however, an end and an X that marks the spot where this ethnography abruptly stops. The end of this excursion with politics is remarkably the same as the beginning to one of the greatest epics ever told. It ends with anger and the faint promise of redemption.

It was almost 10 p.m. on a Friday night when she called and I was at The Poodle Dog Bar waiting for the 10:00 band to set up their equipment. She told me that she just got let go by the party and that the next Friday would be her last day at work, as long as she finished making the arrangements for the SDEC meeting. I was shocked. I thought that after the resounding victories of November they would at least try to keep the team together, with the exception of inevitable losses to better political jobs. We chatted about it for a while and it turned out to be a good thing, she was miserable and needed a change. Her husband had thought she was going to leave a while ago, had crunched all of the numbers and come to the conclusion that they were ok on one salary for a while. There had been a few others who had been let go at the same time, and still more who had made plans to move on, taking jobs as staffers or with the foundation or returning to their hometowns to work on political projects. The office was dropping for a peak of 26 employees to 9. I decided that I would then make her last day my last day, as she had been my direct supervisor for the last 18 months and I was not inclined to deal with a new supervisor for a few scant months. Plus, I now had this document breathing down my neck and needed to devote my time to writing.

When Friday rolled around I showed up at the office in the early afternoon to find, as I suspected, not much going on. There was almost no intern work to be done, so I wasted time until 3:00 when cake and alcohol were served. We all gathered in the conference room as cake was placed on the table along with chips and dip, and cans of beer and bottles of tequila were opened. The vibe in the room was uncomfortable to say the least. Three of the people had just been let go. One was trying his best to get out of his job and find a better one. One had been passed up for a promotion that she clearly deserved, if only she had been in better graces of the people who control the money. Another was leaving to work for a fellow employee after being passed up for two other

staffing jobs. One was leaving because her immediate supervisor took a job at the Capitol. One was moving back to Dallas to her old job. The room was visibly broken into clusters of employees who talked and joked with each other, scarcely acknowledging the others. Finally, the Executive Director came out, sat down, opened a beer and made a toast. He thanked everyone for their hard work, their dedication and the results that they had produced. He toasted a thank you and best wishes as people move onwards and upwards. He noted that they had made great gains that will help Texas and that they would not have been possible without everyone's participation.

It was truly uncomfortable, as the level of dissatisfaction, jealousy and frustration in the room was high. Smiles seemed forced and there were more than a few people who drifted stealthily out of the conference room as soon as they could. I was obvious that there was a sizzling, a bubbling not far beneath the surface. Anger at having been passed up, at being let go as non-essential or extraneous, at being replaced by a colleague, at being sidelined. After a piece of cake and a beer, I got out of there. The tension in the room had become overwhelmingly dense and unbearable. I thanked those I needed to, emptied out my intern folder and made a quiet exit.

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A week later I received a card in the mail. On the cover was a black and white photo of a frumpy old spectacled woman taking a bite of a piece of watermelon that easily extends three feet. The caption was from American novelist Robert Heinlein: "To enjoy the flavor of life, take big bites." Inside, a number of the employees had written good bye thanks and good luck wishes. In messianic light, perhaps this too will seem indigent and distorted. But until then, the card sits on my shelves, awaiting a time when its aura has been worn away and it too will be discarded.

Appendix

Big John
Big John

Every morning at the mine, you could see him arrive.
He stood 6 foot 6, weighed 245.
Kind of broad at the shoulders, narrow at the hip.
And everybody knew you didn't give no lip to Big John.

Big John
Big John
Big Bad John
Big John

Nobody seemed to know where John called home
He just drifted into town and stayed all alone.
He didn't say much, kind of quiet and shy
And if you spoke at all, you'd just said hi to Big John.
Somebody said he came from New Orleans,
Where he got into a fight over a Cajun Queen.
And a crash and a blow from a huge right hand,
sent a Louisiana fella to the promise land.

Big John
Big John
Big bad John
Big John

Then came the day at the bottom of the mine,
when a timber cracked and men started crying.
Minors were praying, and hearts beat fast
and everybody thought they had breathed thier last
cept' John.
Through the dust and the smoke of this man made hell,
walked a giant of a man that the minors knew well.
Grabbed a sagging timber and gave out with a groan,
and like a giant oak tree he just stood there alone, Big John

Big John
Big John
Big Bad John
Big John

And with all of his strength, he gave a mighty shove.
Then a minor yelled out, 'theres a light up above!'.
And 20 men scrambled from a 'would be' grave
now theres only one left down there to save, Big John.
With jacks and timbers, they started back down,
then came that rumble way down in the ground.
And as smoke and gas smelched out of that mine,
everybody knew it was the end of the line, for Big John.

Big John
Big John
Big Bad John
Big John

Now they never re-opend that worthless pit,
they just placed a marble stand in front of it.
These few words are written on that stand,
'At the bottom of this mine, lies one Hell of a man, Big John'

Big John
Big John
Big Bad John
Big John.

Big John
Big John

He came done off the bench after doing his time
He fought heathens and hellions and all kinds of crime
He was just getting started, had a long way to go
We sent him to Washington to the really big show

Big John
Big John
Big Bad John

The Senate wasn't ready said 'Pay your dues'
That John said 'Sit down friend, I got some news
'See I'm from Texas where we do things quick
'and the way this place runs, about to make me sick'

Big John
Big John
Big Bad John

John opened up government let us all take a look
Gave support to our soldiers and rooted out crooks
Rose to the top in just one term
Kept Texas in power, made lesser states squirm

Big John
Big John
Yeah, Big Bad John

As the sun Rose on the Pecos, the big clock it had burned
Six years had darted by, is it another man's turn?
Don't think that big Johnny, we're sending you back
An' you're doing the Lord's work for Texas and we've got
your back.
We'll call folk, we'll hustle, we'll out work our foe.
We'll tell souls in texas you must get six mo'.
For that place out yonder needs more men like you
Who shoot straight, and talk straight and enjoy a good brew.

Big John
Big John
Senator John
Senator John Cornyn

Cornyn's TV Ads:

Sorghum

Texas are optimists, but the economy's tough and people are struggling. Partisanship, politicians pointing fingers, negative ads, those don't help anyone. We should work together and get back to basics: good schools, strong families, low taxes, and finally make government work again. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Family

We all want our children to succeed. Every child should attend a good, safe school and graduate. Education means our children can achieve their potential. Strong families are the foundation for our future. Working hard, moving ahead, it's good for all of us in Texas. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Family 2

In Texas we believe in hard work, straight talk, strong families, and the dignity of every human life. We follow the rules, keep our country strong. Every child should go to a safe school and get the best possible education. Our future resides in every Texas home. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Help

(Voiceover) Three storms in three months, most states would struggle with one, but we're Texans, we help one another. Right now the Red Cross and your local food bank need our help: contributions and the gift of your time. (Spoken directly to the camera) Visit these websites and call this number and tell them that you want to help your fellow Texans. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Right Kind of Change

No one's happy with the way things are being done in Washington. Not Republicans, not Democrats, not me. There's too much petty squabbling while major problems aren't getting fixed. Sighted is what I call it. This nonsense should stop. We need change all right, the right kind of change. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Cows

It shouldn't have happened. Washington only got to work when the answer was too late and too expensive. We need to hold the guilty parties responsible. It's time to stop the waste and back room deals and bring some Texas common sense to Washington. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Cows 2

What disappoints me about Washington is how much is done behind closed doors. Nothing moves unless there's a crisis. They block reform, then we're only left with bad choices. We need to stop the secrecy and the waste, bring some Texas sunshine and a little common sense to Washington. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

All of the Above

We're all hurting from high gas and food prices. Too much foreign oil. No wonder: Washington's blocked every sensible solution. We can protect the environment and still produce more affordable energy. We do it every day right here in Texas. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Opportunity

I'm John Cornyn and I approve this message. Your choice for the Senate is pretty clear this year. Too many politicians are pushing for higher taxes and more government spending. I think we're spending too much already, and higher taxes hurt the economy and Texas families. Help me bring a little more of that Texas common sense to Washington. **John Cornyn for Texas.**

Veterans

I'm Scott O'Grady a former F-16 fighter pilot. I was shot down in the Bosnian war and spent 6 days behind enemy lines surviving until I was finally rescued by the United States Marines. I'm a veteran supporting the re-election of Senator John Cornyn. Regardless of what you hear, I can tell you that John Cornyn is the strongest supporter of our veterans and our men and women who are serving in the military today.

Like they say that you're an all-volunteer military. You recruit the soldier or airman or sailor or marine but you retain the family. I really believe, coming from a military family myself, that military families today serve their country as well.

I was in the Army and I know he's great for vets.

Senator Cornyn has always been a friend of the veteran

Noriega's TV Ads:

Ready To Serve

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Noriega. As a soldier he served our country in Afghanistan and on our borders. As a legislator, Noriega fought and won for Texas families, healthcare for children, better pay for teacher and tax breaks for small businesses. Now he's running for

the United States Senate to take on the biggest fights of all: to get our economy moving, pass affordable healthcare and bring our troops and dollars home.

Ditch

Six years ago, we sent John Cornyn to Washington to be a voice for us. Instead he rubber-stamped the Bush agenda, sold us out to the special interests at every turn. Energy prices went up, healthcare got more expensive, Iraq got mismanaged, and our economy, it's in the ditch. Other than that, I guess he did fine. Isn't it time to put Texas families first? I'm Rick Noriega and I approve this message because that's what I'll do for you in the United States Senate.

Chicken Little

I'm fed up with Washington Politicians who work day and night to bail out special interest but ignore Texas families who have lost their homes, their savings and struggle to pay for groceries and gas.

(female voice) But John Cornyn just doesn't get it. Hear for yourself.

(Cornyn's voice) The chicken little comments that you hear, about the sky falling... I mean it's really overblown.

(Noriega)It's time for change and a new kind of Senator. I'm Rick Noriega, I approve this message because I'll be a senator who has your back.

Economy

As our senator, John Cornyn's job was to stand up to Wall Street greed. But Cornyn took nearly four million dollars from CEOs and financial groups he was supposed to be regulating and now we're having to pay to clean up the mess. On all the issues that matter, Cornyn's failed policies have cost us all. Health care is less affordable, gas prices are higher, and college is further and further out of reach for our children. Six years of John Cornyn has been expensive for Texas families. Can we really afford six more? I'm Rick Noriega and I approve this message because I think Texas families have already paid enough.

Energy

(Voiceover)The price of gas isn't the only thing that's gone up since John Cornyn went to Washington.

(Noriega)It's time Texas demonstrated bold leadership with a new energy policy. John Cornyn's about the status quo the big oil companies. It's time now we had leadership that moves us to renewable energy and finds ways that we become less dependant. This is a national security issue, and you need to elect Rick Noriega as your United States Senator to keep Texas an energy leader, for economic development, to grow green job is this state, so that we can become the energy leader that we are.

Fed Up

Like you, I'm fed up with Washington Politicians who work day and night to bail out special interest but ignore Texas families who have lost their homes, their savings and struggle to pay for groceries and gas. John Cornyn has failed Texas families. It's time for change and a new kind of Senator. On the battlefield, at the border and in the legislature, I've proven that I'll fight for you and your family. I'm Rick Noriega, I approve this message because I'll be a Senator who has your back.

Follow the Herd

You'd go away and leave me
I'd be so lonely then
With only a memory of you

You know that I'd forgive you
And take you to my heart
If I thought that you could keep a vow
But in just about a week
You'd tear my soul apart
I loved you once
But I can't trust you now

(Sung by Jack Guthrie, words and music by Billy Hughes)

Healthcare

(Casey Mueller, Iraq War Veteran) I'm proud to have a candidate for Senate who, like me, served our country.
(Noriega) While our soldiers risked their lives, John Cornyn voted to deny them benefits, body armor and even healthcare. And John Cornyn's healthcare? Top of the line, paid for by you and me. John Cornyn has taken hundreds of thousands of dollars from insurance companies, he supports a radical scheme to tax your insurance policy and he's voted against insuring Texas children six times. I'll be your US Senator, not the insurance companies'.

Dress Up

(Children) Happy Halloween!!
(Goofy voiceover) Poor John Cornyn, he can dress up but he can't disguise his record. He voted against children's healthcare, voted against senior's healthcare, voted against veteran's benefits, voted against new energy jobs, and he did the bidding of a convicted felon, Jack Abramoff. Even a wizard can't make that bad record disappear.
(Rick Noriega) I'm Rick Noriega and I approve this message because as your Senator, I won't have to pretend to represent Texas families.

Early Voting

It was the fall of 2004. the first Afghan battalion I helped train went on their first real-world mission, deployed to kandahar to provide security for the first free election in Afghanistan's history and the first election where women were free to vote. Over 90% of the afghan people voted. There were lines as far as the eye could see. Women dressed in burkahs, some pregnant, many surrounded by their children waited patiently through 100 degree heat. You see that, you never wonder again if voting matters. Now it's our turn. This election, with our stakes so high, America and our democracy can once more be a beacon to the world. I hope you'll join me and millions of your fellow citizens and vote. And trust me, it'll be a lot easier for us than it was in Afghanistan.

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